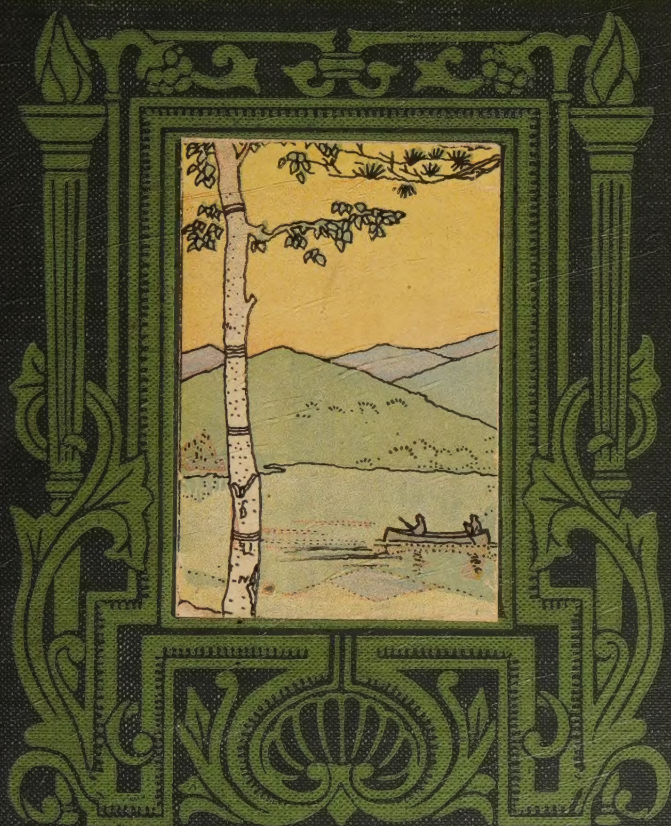


THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS

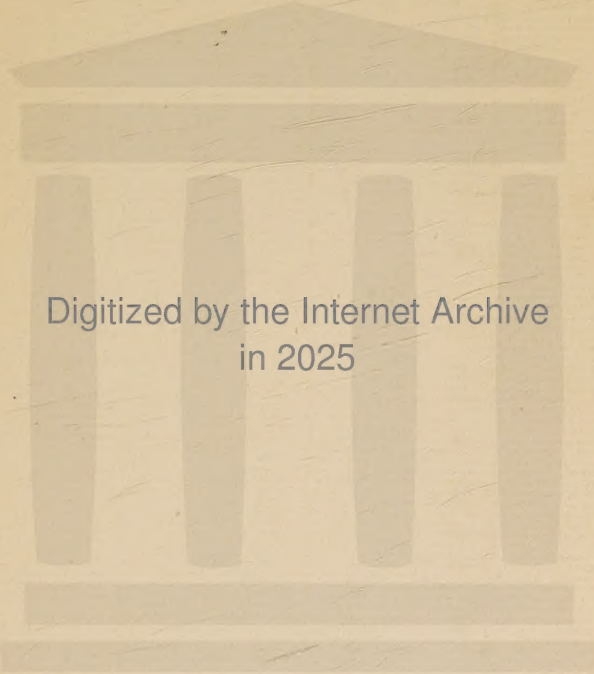


A Story of Modern
American Life ~ ~

Lois Nicholas. 1946.

Theresa Ellison.

Oct. 1901.



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"THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS" IS THE NINTH OF TWELVE AMERICAN NOVELS TO BE PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS DURING 1901, WRITTEN FOR THE MOST PART BY NEW AMERICAN WRITERS, AND DEALING WITH DIFFERENT PHASES OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LIFE.

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THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS

A Novel

By

Florence Wilkinson



New York and London
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1901

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Book II

The Strength of the Hills

CHAPTER I

Joc Hartle's Job

THREE o'clock in the morning, January, five feet of snow in the woods, a thick dust of it whirling through the air, and the thermometer at zero, are not trifles to be contended with. The last of the skidders left Hartle's Camp and ploughed their way up a go-back road to the skidway where the morning's job was to begin. On either side of the hollowed footprints they strode in, the snow was caked like whipped icing. The unsteady swing of their lanterns' light made the darkness blacker behind them.

"Blows like the deuce, eh, Enoch?" said Gene Lawless to the plunking shadow behind him.

"You tacked the wrong handle onto me this time," said the soft, toothless voice of Eli Barhite.

"My soul, you be Eli, be you? I thought by the gallumph of you through that there snow-drift you was Enoch Holme. Going up mornings and coming back nights he's the first to step off into the snow."

"His mind is sot on other things," remarked Eli, placatorily.

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"You're right, all right. If he hadn't 'a' been so crazy sot on books, he might 'a' been boss of this job instid of Joe Hartle."

"And a durned sight better boss than Joe, for with all his book-l'arnin' Enoch's got horse-sense to beat the band, and he's as good as his word any day. His promises ain't writ on no chunk of ice, like Hartle's be." For mild-mannered, reticent Eli this was an unusual burst of opinion.

"The trouble with Hartle, he's so deuced big-headed when he's got the liquor in him. There's more smuggling of liquor into this camp than you knows on, Eli Barhite."

Gene, with his narrow, dark face tipped by gray chin whiskers, his invective tone and air of conviction on every subject, was directly opposed to wide-cheeked Eli, who deferred to every one in camp. Nevertheless, the two were boon companions.

Gene continued:

"I kin tell you jest one thing, Eli, if Colonel Hollister knew the goings-on in this here tract of his'n, he'd hev Joe Hartle out of it, double-quick time."

As a seer of other men's minds, and of their acts under given circumstances non-existent, no one surpassed Gene Lawless.

"What d'ye think of these hyar log-roads he's blazed fer us?" ventured Eli.

"What do I think?" Gene's tone implied that the very question was an insult. "Why, it be the gol darndest log-road I ever seen. Hartle 'ain't sense enough to run a sprinkler. They hez to keep half the boys digging sand for the hills, and the other shovelling snow on the hollers, not to mention onet them two horses killt by the drive-holes."

Joc Hartle's Job

"It's a purty stiff grade, Blue Mountain," said Eli. "I 'ain't no notion of bein' a teamster when I see how beat out the boys be. Gosh, they don't get to supper till long after dark. Eight trips is too much. Thet's all I have to say."

"It be murder," said Lawless, savagely, "so be the Blue Mountain road. If we don't finish up with more horses, and men too, killt from Hartle's Camp, then my name's not Gene Lawless."

The men walked in silence for some time, then Eli asked:

"Gene, did you take notice of that new feller Joc hired last night?"

"Nothing particular. Noticed he spoke kinder easy."

"He didn't hev our ways, nohow. He spoke his words smooth-like."

"Maybe he come from Canady."

"He ain't no Canuck, neither. But he wanted a job bad. Wal, he's got it. He won't stick to it long, that's my idee. I never seen the likes of his hands, Gene. His nails were all drawed to a point jest as nice, and were shiny like looking-glass."

"Likely enough," replied Lawless, "he's one of these here tramps that comes from the city. They think they can make big money up here, or else they've got their reasons for skipping out to home. He hez his reasons, you kin bet, for coming into the woods."

Gene and Eli were still gossiping about the new hand when they arrived at the skidway where Enoch Holme stood. He was a master at piling the logs on the bolsters with accuracy of eye and skill of judgment. His loads were always properly balanced,

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and carried more feet of timber than any one else's at Hartle's.

Torches were stuck in the snow, casting a red light here and there over the whipped drifts of snow that caked on the logs and overhung the roadway. Enoch Holme, in his blue and red woollen stockings pulled over corduroy breeches, stood with his cant-hook prodding here and lifting there, as a huge stick of spruce was started on the skids. He was a man of uncommon size, with the well-set head and square military bearing that many lumbermen have, and his clothes, moulded to him in satisfactory wrinkles by long wear and service, had a becoming air of good-fellowship. He was the only man on the crew who wore a beard, mustaches being the approved fashion at the camp. Enoch's tawny beard and head of bushy hair were a popular subject of merriment in the shanty songs sung at night in the "dog room" around the crackling stove:

"The boss of the skidders is Enoch Holme,
And a damn good skidder he;
With hair like a pony's and beard like a broom,
But he never goes off on a spree.
He's preaching his spree.
Go to hell, Enoch Holme,
You're a damn sight too pious for me."

Next to Enoch stood the stranger, a young man of muscular build, in the regulation woodsman's clothes. His hands were thrust into his pockets and his woollen cap, well pulled down over his eyes, shaded a face unlike the rough backwoods type. Close-shaven and tanned by out-door exposure, the features reveal-

Joc Hartle's Job

ed a fineness of line that smacked almost of effeminacy. A deep dent dimpled the shapely chin.

"Now, then, Azzy, here she comes," shouted Enoch, as the huge stick rolled across the sled.

Azzy Holme, a slim, tall boy with glittering blue eyes in a brown face, swung out his peavey, and the log took its place.

"Give it me," said the stranger, taking the pole from Azzy's hand to assist with the next log.

He handled the peavey effectively, though in the manner of one not entirely used to it. His quickness and strength called forth a word from Enoch, who added:

"You're not used to the business, are you?"

"I've been out of it for a time," answered the young man, "but it won't take me long to get hold." He flashed a bright smile upon Enoch, and in the lantern-light Enoch saw for the first time the dimple in his chin and how it quivered when he smiled, and took an unreasoning dislike to him forthwith. Nevertheless, he admitted to himself that the young man worked with vim and intelligence. The other men looked upon him with suspicion because of his "smooth-spoken ways." Hangers-on and tramps of a miscellaneous description at these lumber camps were not so unusual that this particular fellow aroused any extraordinary curiosity.

As the men completed the load, Azzy stepped to the gray horse's head, stroking the long forehead and velvety, trembling nose.

"How's Judy this morning?" asked Enoch.

"She was pretty peaked after the last trip yesterday. We didn't get in till half-past eight, but I

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rubbed her down good and she's first-rate this morning, bean't you, Judy?"

Judy turned a liquid eye on the speaker, and rubbed an appreciative nose against his cheek.

The men grappled the chains around the completed load, and Enoch took a last look to see that it was well balanced and securely bound. The grade was steep and slippery, and in the dim light of four o'clock it was full of peril.

"Has Davy's gang shovelled this morning?" he inquired of Azzy.

"They were melting out the pit when I come by the pine-tree, and down that second gully they've spread a load of hay."

"Off you go, then."

Enoch plunged heartily into the loading for the next team, when a strident voice called, coming out of the darkness towards the horses' heads:

"You hain't callin' that a load! By G—, if you fellows can't put more sticks than that on a sled, first trip, good roadin', and early in the morning, I want to know why."

Azzy stopped his horses, and the voice went on, as the man emerged from the dark into the fitful orange light about the skidway. He swung his swivelled torch savagely, peering by turn into the faces of the assembled crew.

"Enoch, you're too bashful with the boys. Jolly them up, and they'll draw fer you. Swear at 'em, and they'll work better."

Joe Hartle, the boss, laughed leeringly, adding:

"Or exhort 'em, if that be more in your line."

"Pretty full," muttered one of the men, significantly, as Hartle's dislocated laugh sounded.

Joc Hartle's Job

"Go ahead, Azzy," said Enoch, in a low voice.

The boy, perched like a grasshopper on the top of the tall load, whistled to his team.

"You drive them horses one step out of their tracks, and I'll kill you," cried Joe, savagely. "Who's boss here, you or me, Enoch Holme? Load up that sled, boys. You could carry them there sticks on your backs. Damn you, d'ye think I've took this here job for fun?"

The word of the boss went, for discipline at the camp was military, and who dared disobey risked a discharge. Wages were high that winter, and the job a long one, so the men who had gone in for Hartle were unwilling to jeopardize their job. Hartle held a contract from Hollister & Hollister to cut and haul two hundred thousand feet of timber. It had been a close shave between him and Enoch Holme as to who secured the contract, for both men were well known to the Hollister firm as experienced lumbermen.

The boys, in sullen silence, commenced loading more logs on the sled under Hartle's direction, while Enoch stood back, his hands in his pockets, his stern, hard-set face changing expression as varying resolves crossed it. Now it was to knock down the drunken blusterer, then to throw up his job entirely and go out of the woods, again to keep his peace and put up with the insolent interference for policy's sake. The world, as Emerson says, is a mush of concessions, and a great deal depended on Enoch's earnings, the support of an old father and an idolized sister, as well as an ambitious future—he had planned for himself. Upon the decision of a minute hangs the destiny of a lifetime. Enoch made and unmade his lifetime

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several times in as many minutes, and then, with an expressive jerk of his great shoulders, a jerk that said, "We will make the best of it," he turned towards his crew and the skidway.

"What are ye dawdling for?" shouted Joe to Azzy. "If you wants a bigger load you can have it, and to hell with you!"

"Risky business," blurted out Enoch, "sending that load off with a third more logs than he ought to haul down a mountain road that doesn't allow for braking."

"G'long with him yourself," flung back Hartle. "We don't need you here; do we, boys?"

He broke out into song and laughter with the rapid change of mood of a tipsy man:

"Go to hell, Enoch Holme,
You're a damn sight too pious for me."

Enoch took a torch and ran ahead of the team, swinging up the blazing light before their careful feet and intent, wrinkled foreheads.

To all of this interchange of abuse and remonstrance the young stranger, his hands again plunged into his pockets, had been an indifferent spectator. His smiling brown eyes wandered from speaker to speaker, and then he whistled to himself a little air. Joe turned upon him with an oath:

"Stop your mouth and get to work. I didn't hire you to set up no tunes for us."

The young man still smiled, but ceased whistling.

"What's my work, boss?"

"What's my work, boss?" whined Hartle, in derisive imitation of the easy tone. "Didn't I tell you last night?"

Joc Hartle's Job

"You did not, confound you!" roared the young man, his face flushing with anger.

"Take that, then, for your answer!" roared back Hartle, lifting a threatening arm as if to knock down the stranger. But his antagonist's reply came quicker than speech, and Joc Hartle rolled ignominiously in the snow, head first in a huge snow-drift. The loud laughter of the men showed plainly where sympathy lay, and from that moment the young man was firmly established in their favor.

Eli turned to him with explanatory advice.

"Follow after that Enoch. He'll show you your job. He's the boss skidder."

Hartle was still struggling in the snow-drift, and the other men added their voices:

"Go on with ye, man. Joc'll forgit all abaout this when he comes to hisself."

But the stranger stood his ground.

"What name do ye go by?" asked Eli, respectfully.

"Dick," answered the young man, shortly.

By this time Hartle had regained his feet and, strange to say, his temper as well.

"There's a man fer ye, boys!" he cried. "He's got an arm. We'll have a round in the dog-room this evening, Dick. You fools"—to the men that stood gaping at this sudden change of spirit—"get about your business. You, Dick"—in a more oily voice—"go down the road there after that feller Holme, and do what he tells ye."

Dick turned on his heel and hurried down the log-road between the shadows of the trees. There were four or five miles of steep mountain descent, winding through the growth of evergreen and hardwood forest. It had been cut and levelled sufficiently

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to make, in winter, a fair road. After sprinkling and freezing there was a floor like glass. Hartle, who had blazed it out in the early autumn, had tried to save on the curves and shorten the trip by adding to the danger. The road went clean over some of the steepest pitches when a loop might have avoided them.

"Steady, boy, steady," called back Enoch, swinging his lantern back and forth as his keen eyes travelled over the road ahead.

The horses pulled strenuously, climbing a little hill, at the top of which the worst descent began. Little lanterns fastened between their ears were like the strange, large eyes of a fabled animal, behind which their forms and the unwieldy bulk of the load loomed vaguely, like a terrifying nightmare.

"Can't you help her a little more, Punch?" called Azzy, in his human conversational tones, as he touched up the bay with his long whip-lash.

"There now—that's better. Bully for you, Judy. Here we are at the top. Whoa a bit! Rest a spell. Hi-hum-Harry, but my hands are cold!"

The boy drew off his double mittens and applied his fingers alternatively to the warmth of his lips and breath. The horses stood on the top of the hill. Far away to the east, behind the black bank of hills over Loon Lake, intimations of the winter dawn showed in a strip of rusty yellow like a fluted ribbon behind the appliqué of lace-work forest. On either side of the hollowed road the snow lay frothed up in banks, with the forest trunks, numberless and slim, barely discernible in grayness. Somewhere among the trees was heard the voice of a man manœuvring a single log that had been left behind by the skidder.

Joc Hartle's Job

Down in the hollow to the right one could almost have dropped a plumb-line to where some lights quivered and strayed like a huddling group of fire-flies. They were the road gang who kept the road in repair, shovelling dirt or spreading straw where the sleds were to be retarded, and putting snow on the levels where it was worn away. They were in ill humor, having been kept out too late the night before, and this morning they had scamped their work. Below the sharp curve, where a great pine-tree stood, the road had been cut out of the side-hill. On the left hand the upward slope made a high wall overhanging the road. On the right the hill-side fell abruptly away into a ravine, where some forty feet down Witchhopple Brook lay under its blanket of snow. The sides of the ravine had been swept by a fire the preceding summer, so that now its rounded contour was unbroken by trees. It was around this curve that Azzy had to pass when he reached the bottom of the hill, on the crest of which he had paused to breathe his horses.

In the terrible hush of winter dawn on the mountain Enoch Holme's heart was full of bitterness. The lot of a lumberman had not always been his, nor yet would it be his life-calling. Of that he felt assured, though there were possibilities in it of out-door freedom, of largeness, of virility, that appealed to his sturdy and resolute nature. Under a contractor like Joc Hartle, lumbering became intolerable.

He swung his torch before and behind, shooting out a pathway of red over the glazed whiteness of the snow. The tracks for the runners were well gravelled.

"All's well!" he shouted.

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Azzy's team began the down-hill, the harsh gravel scarcely seeming to hold back the runners as the heavy load gathered to itself momentum with the grade. The steel shoes were braked with chains which ground savagely into the tracks, but even so Azzy's heart was in his throat as the horses galloped under the urging of the great load at their heels. All he could do was to guide them. Even if he had been able to check their speed, the logs would have crushed downward on them, dragging them under, in the onward rush of the big sled. Now for the curve and the side-hill. He gathered the reins tight into his hands and held them with wrists of iron.

"Whoa there, Punch! Steady, Judy, old girl!"

Enoch, on foot in advance, heard the ponderous swift load approach at the same time that he discovered just around the curve a defective layer of sand over the ice of the tracks. It was so thin here that it would scarcely retard the action of the runners. The sled would be shot forward with tremendous violence. The maddened horses would be crushed to death, and Azzy— Good God, Azzy!

"Jump for your life!" he shouted, standing for one second directly in front of the plunging team as they pounded towards him. Then, catching an overhanging limb, he swung himself up the slope as the terrified horses dashed past him.

"Whoa there, Punch. Steady, Judy," called Azzy's brave young voice, as the runners slid on the treacherous ice. The chained logs creaked and strained, impending forward.

Enoch, watching, saw the gigantic weight of them careening to the outside curve, as Azzy drew on the ineffectual lines. If he but made the turn the rest

Joc Hartle's Job

of the journey might be accomplished. But it was not to be. The inside runner was thrown up on the middle ridge. The sled over-balanced. The depth of the ravine was below. The struggling horses had the strength of kittens against the force of the overthrow. Over and over they crashed, horses and logs, with a fearful sound of riven chains and broken timber.

"In God's name, where is Azzy?" thought Enoch. He dared not look below.

When Azzy felt the load sway under him, when the nigh horse lost his footing, Azzy's eyes grew blind, and swift, merciful oblivion drowned his senses—a wave of the sea that sweeps over one when calamity is too awful. Then a sharp scratch roused the benumbed senses. A frozen branch tore across his face, and instinctively he flung up his hands to grasp—something. The sled was no longer beneath him. He hung, and a sound like thunder was in his ears. His eyes were tight shut, all his faculties were concentrated in that iron grasp of the something—when he heard his brother's voice, "Thank God, it is Azzy!"

Unconsciously his fingers lost their tension, and with surprising quickness Azzy found himself floundering in snow to his waist. He had dropped from the branch that swept above the road. Enoch stood above him, also the stranger, Dick.

"Jerusalem, that was a close shave!" the boy exclaimed, rubbing the snow out of his eyes. He looked about him dazed. "Where are my horses?"

Then Enoch, up to this time speechless, was overcome. He had the emotional nature that goes with great physical strength and the unconsciousness of a big, simple nature.

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"God in heaven! Come to me, Azrael," he cried. He drew his brother to his heart and held him there.

Dick stood to one side, the tears in his transparent eyes. But Azzy had been in the danger, not a witness of it, so he was not correspondingly moved.

"Where are my horses—where are Punch and Judy?"

Enoch took him to the hill-top and pointed downward. A dark heap lay in the bottom of the gulch.

"I remember," moaned Azzy. "My poor Punch and Judy!"

"That coward Hartle!" ground out Enoch.

"We'll have an end of this," blurted Dick, savagely.

Azzy and Enoch took instant note of his presence.

"What d'ye mean?" asked Enoch, sharply, shooting a penetrating glance at Dick from under his bushy eyebrows.

Dick bit his lips, and the susceptible chin quivered. He had made a slip, and this man Enoch was shrewd enough to build upon it.

"I meant nothing," he replied. "You have a fool for a boss, and the sooner you know it the better."

"That may be so," said Enoch, "but what business is it of yours?"

Dick admired Enoch for his straightforwardness and dogged reticence.

"A man worth having," he thought.

Enoch did not like Dick. He believed Dick was either more—or less—than he seemed. It is curious, this interplay of temperament—by the same process like and dislike generated.

CHAPTER II

The Duel

THE men's shanty at Hartle's Camp was a long, low building, fashioned of logs, the rough round of uncut logs making a picturesquely corrugated exterior and interior surface for the walls. The cracks, gray-chinked with curly moss, picked out by pleasing lines of relief the dark walls. The snow was heaped to the eaves of the roof, except where it had been scooped away before the windows. Long icicles, ancient and substantial, made an irregular crystal lambrequin across the little windows.

Opposite, among its companion snow-drifts and icicles, was the cook shanty, where the men had their meals. The sheds for the horses completed the little colony, the homely signs of whose daily existence about the doors marred the silent beauty of the forest. Guarding the camp, in grave dignity, stood the immovable trees, their feet sunk into the unsullied snow, their tops reaching up to the brilliant sapphire of sky.

Bluejays conversed with each other in various keys, harshly chiding the gray squirrel who gibbered in their faces, or exclaiming, in remonstrant surprise, at the too early appearance of the teamsters, and

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sometimes indulging in musical reflections, like the joyful winding of watches.

The gray Canada jays hopped up and down the log-roads, insolently familiar with things human, and watched with suspicious shrewdness the final destination of potato peelings and ham bones proceeding from the shanty door.

Sometimes throughout the silent woods resounded the drumming of the arctic woodpecker, knocking for his dinner at some hospitable door, and his orange head gleamed against a purple trunk. Except for such and a few kindred noises the woods were quiet all day long, the blue shadows filtering through in exquisite patterns on the snow-floor, and the great clouds drifting along the hill-tops, peach-colored in contrast with the snow's blue sparkle and glisten. The deer came and went quietly, keeping by day far within their yards. The foxes, the rabbits, the wood-mice, and the grouse left the marks of their little feet in lively hieroglyphs along the lumber roads where Enoch went at morning, noon, and night. Sometimes, half smiling, he would decipher the autobiographies inscribed by the little people of the underwoods, while the authors themselves remained inscrutable. More often, as he hurried by, he would reflect upon the law of leisure, necessary to the highest development of beauty and strength. The opportunity to wait is an element of success, but many there are who, by the very force of circumstances, choose what is not their calling. Leisure to wait is not given to all. After Enoch's two years in a country college he had been called back to his lumbering by family exigencies, but he had first sought ordination from the Methodist Church. Absolutely un-

The Duel

sectarian as his training had been, in a primitive community where churches had died out, yet his deeply religious instinct craved expression in a simple sort of ministry among his own people and in the camp. The ordination gave him a certain authority.

On the night after Azzy's accident, he strode down the logging road alone, at sunset, noting how the top of Mount Taseco flamed to rose, reflecting the western glory.

The light-hearted lumbermen following him "horsed" each other jovially, the thought of supper a star of hope before them. Only Eli Barhite was silent. The horses, Punch and Judy, had been his, born and bred on his little farm among the Adirondack foot-hills.

"Ye're daown abaout the hosses," said Gene, scornfully. "What's the difference? Ye'll get the price of them from Joc."

"It's not the worth of the hosses I mind," said Eli, "but they was the kindest-natured critters I ever seen. Judy there, you couldn't frighten her at nothing, but Punch, he frightened at pichers. My girl, she drived him one day from Mis' Spriggs over to the Corners out home. You know whar the bridge crosses Elder River, and there was a circus come by there and had stuck up their pichers on the fence beyont. There was one of a lady with red stockings up to her waist and not much else in the way of trimmins and the rosiest cheeks you ever seen and hair all yellor. It was painted real good, I thought, but Punch, he frightened at the picher and ran clean home, tight as he could lick. Now, warn't that curious?"

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Eli laughed his gentle, toothless laugh at Punch's eccentric disapproval of high art.

"He always shied at it when I took him past, till Hartle's boys teared out the legs and then he didn't seem to mind. I reckon he was gettin' used to the picher by that time, anyway."

"I reckon he was," Gene added, with ironic indifference to Eli's horse psychology.

There were two men that ate their meals in silence that evening: Joe Hartle, somewhat subdued after the morning's bluster, glancing sidelong at the men to see if they were looking at him, and Enoch Holme, wondering what the outcome would be of the disaffection at the camp, and whether his duty to the Hollister firm would demand any action from him. Enoch's nature courted rather than shunned responsibility, so fearful was he of not doing his full duty. This characteristic, over-developed or wrongly directed, becomes tyranny. Hartle's leathery neck bent over his plate, and the food passed with unrelenting speed from his knife to his mouth, till by pushing back his plate he signified that his appetite was appeased. To the great relief of his mess-mates, he banged out of the room.

"Jerked out like a butt-log from the chute bottom," remarked Lawless, dryly. "Nothing could 'a' held him back."

"Whar's he going to, anyway?" asked one of the men.

"This place is too small fer him," Eli said, with slow irony. "He's got more important business on hand."

"He better'd go out and count dead hosses," Azzy blurted out. "There's one thing I know—I'm going

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to get my time from him Saturday and clear out o' this."

"So be I," added one and another of the men. "We've had about all we can stand of Joc Hartle. We've got our women and children to consider, and this here is too risky."

"Cut off yer own noses," drawled Davy, a thin, yellow man, with a cast in one eye. "Whar's all your good money, come spring time? Ye've et it up, and whar's yer women and childer?"

Dick, the stranger, sat removed from this hurly-burly of argument, an ancient and dog-eared novel spread before him on the table in the light of the ill-trimmed lamp. The men had forgotten his presence.

"I'm going to clear out o' this," reiterated Azzy, glancing round the group and then a bit anxiously at his brother, who, scowling and stern-mouthed, was wrapped in his own thoughts.

"There's one thing and only one thing to be done," Enoch said, rising and commanding intent attention. "It's not to leave the job and lose our own wages; what would happen then?"

Dick looked up from the yellow pages of his book, and scanned the speaker attentively.

"More hands taken on, more trouble for Joc and them, from bad to worse. That is not the way out, boys."

"What, then?" came several voices.

"Colonel Hollister should be informed." Enoch's tone rang firm against the opposition he knew would follow. There was no crime on their calendar more despicable than informing. A reform however desirable, retribution however praiseworthy, was never

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an offset for the unsavory reputation of an "inform-er." A deer-killer, for instance, was practically secure from arrest when the game warden was a member of his community.

"Who in hell will inform him, Enoch?" asked Gene Lawless. "There ain't none of us boys as 'ud go back on a mate."

"No, no," growled the "boys," sullenly.

"By gosh, Colonel Hollister oughter know," pronounced Gene, bitterly, "but I ain't the one to tell him."

"We're afraid to," said Enoch. "We ain't afraid to break a man's head for a personal grudge, but we're afraid to tell an honest tale to right a wrong. We ain't afraid of the thing—we're afraid of the name of the thing."

"Are you afraid?" asked Azzy, clearly. The dog-room waited intently for his answer. Enoch was not afraid to be silent for an appreciable moment. Dick, the new man, turned the pages of the ancient novel with unthinking fingers.

"If Joe Hartle's thrown out, I take his place. You all know that, boys. That's what I am afraid of. I'd rather lose this right hand than oust a man for my own gain."

"What are ye buzzing about?" said Hartle, unexpectedly entering the room. He flung his frieze cap on the wood-pile and looked at Enoch.

"About you."

"You be, be you? Well, out with your preacher talk to my face, and then to hell with you!"

"Leave the room," said Enoch, addressing the men. "Leave the room," as they hesitated. "I'll have it out with Hartle between ourselves."

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"You softies, what are ye mindin' him for? Stand by and see the fun."

"Ain't you a match for him, Joc?" asked Gene Lawless.

"Lordy! you're right, my boy. It's more than a stand-off between me and the preacher any day."

"You're better off without us'n," said Eli. "We mought pitch in at the wrong time."

"And spile my innings," laughed Joc, bitterly. Then he looked suspiciously at Enoch. "What ye want of me, anyway?"

"You have an accounting to make to me," said Enoch, with slow significance. "You put my brother's life in the balance and 'twas only God's mercy that saved him."

"And it'll only be God's mercy that could save you to-night," jeered Joc, profanely. "Clear out o' here, boys. You—Dick there, you're a stranger and not particular as to sides. You stay and be referee."

Dick smiled. "Why don't you go out into the open? This is a dashed little hole for two big men."

"We need the lamp and the table for our accounting," replied Enoch, simply.

"Bless me, if Enoch Holme ain't going to fight," whispered Eli to Gene, as they stumped across the icy road to the cook shanty.

"I ain't never none too sure of what Enoch's going to do," replied Gene, "but there's the devil to pay when he gets that look in the eyes."

"Wait a minute," said Enoch, within. He drew from his pocket a pad of paper and a pencil.

"What in blazes? Last will and testament?"

"Sit down there and write."

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"What in blazes?"

"Sit down there and write."

It was a contest of will, not of brute strength, as the two men looked at each other, while the smiling young fellow at the other end of the table watched the curious scene.

"What d'ye mean?"

"You are going to write an account of what happened to-day on Blue Mountain."

"The devil I am!"

"And of the break-down last week."

"Go on."

"And of the whiskey you've drunk—that's played the mischief with you."

"The devil I am!"

"And you're going to sign your name and I mine, and this stranger his."

"You're a fool, Enoch Holme!"

"And you will send it to Colonel Hollister."

"I will, eh?"

"You will write it on this paper." Enoch laid the pad upon the table. "And with this pencil."

Joe's fingers closed around the pencil. "That's all very fine," he sneered, "in a story-book. Now for business."

Enoch stopped him as he commenced throwing off his coat.

"Not so quick. Sit down and write."

Joe sat down in the chair, the pencil still in his hand. Enoch sat opposite.

"It's got to be done, Joe. If not by you, by somebody else. Now go ahead."

"By somebody else!" Joe wilted a little before

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Enoch's incisive gaze. "Oh, the devil take you, Enoch Holme!"

"Go ahead!"

The brief, ominous simplicity and calmness of Enoch's tone, its finality, had their effect upon Joc. It would cost him nothing to write those few lines. It would mean nothing. He would tear the paper to pieces the next morning in Enoch's face. What lay behind that relentless fixity of gaze? Had he really the power to force him to write against his will? He would be a fool if he wrote a word. What would Enoch do if he refused? Something within him had been warning him of trouble ahead—the looks of his men, their silence. This would stave it off. The men had agreed on this between them. Enoch was the arch conspirator. Hang it all, why couldn't he keep away from the bottle?

"Go ahead!"

The blue eyes met his own and cauterized them.

"Why have I got to do this?"

"It's the only way out for you. Begin."

Joc's clumsy fingers directed the pencil across the paper. When he finished he would get up and fling the lamp at Enoch's head.

Dick, over in his corner, did not know what to make of this curious duel. He adored physical strength and physical courage. He had given Enoch credit for both. This was a sort of moral duel that did not appeal to him, but the unusualness of Enoch's attitude piqued his curiosity. He supposed the fellow was acting from a sense of duty. There is a great difference between duty and honor. The latter Dick understood, but not the former. The sphinx herself could not make clear to some people the genesis of

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acts that spring from inborn morality. They are more difficult to understand than vices to the good.

"Read it," said Enoch, as Joe laid aside his pencil.

Joe laughed derisively and read the brief document.

"It will do. You have signed it?"

Enoch added his name and then pushed the paper down the table to Dick, who, reluctant, but still more reluctant not to play out his part in the little drama, wrote his signature.

"Dick? Just Dick? Have you no surname, man?" Enoch darted a question from under his bushy eyebrows.

"I'll add my other name when it's time."

Enoch despised mystery, and the affectation of mystery still more.

"It's time now," he said, grimly.

"You're mistaken," laughed Dick. "Look out!"

Joe was reaching furtively across the table for the document. Now that the tension of the situation was relaxed, he realized his folly. Enoch turned at Dick's warning and laid his great hand on the paper.

"Let it be there. It is part of the accounting between us, Joe. You've stood in my way once too often. You came between me and the contract. We'll let that pass. You insulted me before my men this morning. We'll let that pass. You risked my brother's life on a cowardly venture. There's that between us."

"Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm your conscience, and when I'm through with you I'll let you alone."

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Dick scarcely knew whether to admire or despise the sublime moral arrogance of this man.

Davy's voice was heard from outside, from the little window where he had been peeping in.

"For all the world, boys, Joc's a-sittin' there as gentle as a suckin' lamb."

Joc tumbled to his feet, with an oath, flinging the lamp across the table at Enoch. It crashed upon the floor and went out, leaving the room in darkness except where it was streakily lighted by the central stove. The fight for which Dick's fingers had been tingling precipitated itself in good earnest. Joc was the aggressor and Enoch on the defensive. The quick, short breathing of the men, and the sound of wrestlers in deadly interlock filled the room. Then there was a fall. Joc was down, Enoch over him, his knee upon Hartle's chest.

"Look out!" cried Dick again, as he caught a metallic gleam in the dark. As Enoch jerked himself backward and Dick sprang forward, Joc's pistol went off, and the next moment was knocked from his hand by Dick.

"He's only shot himself," said Dick, as the men rushed in. "Why didn't you fight him in the first place instead of this confounded confession business?"

Joc, half stunned by his fall, and his arm limp from the pistol wound, was being led up-stairs, cursing, by one of the men.

"Stop a bit," said Dick to Hartle. "You had better thank your stars it wasn't murder."

"Murder! My God! Take me to bed, boys," said Hartle.

"Wait!" cried Enoch. A sudden revulsion of

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feeling had come over him, over his own part in this miserable scuffle. He wanted to wash his hands of the whole business and go out of the woods.

"Here's your paper. You don't want it?"

Then Enoch opened a stove cover and thrust it into the flames.

"I like you for that," said Dick, who unaccountably seemed the controlling spirit. "But Colonel Hollister shall know of it just the same."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm Dick Hollister."

Dick smiled as he found himself the centre of the rough group. It was a pleasing and novel moment.

CHAPTER III

An Initial and a Name

FOR some months now, since Dick's adventurous visit to the woods, Enoch had been boss on the Hollister job. During that time he had been receiving from the Hollister Lumber Company letters signed A. MacDonald, Secretary. They had been in the nature of brief acknowledgments of his monthly statements, or detailed specifications of the lumber required for the mills, or questions on the condition of the uncleared lands of the company, of the interlucation necessary, the yield of the hard-wood stands, the loss by fire and slash, and other such matters as pertained to large lumber interests. These letters were type-written, with the letter-head printed boldly across the top of the large sheet:

HOLLISTER & HOLLISTER,
Lumber and Timber,
Doors, Sashes, and Blinds.
New York Offices, 26-28 Greenville Street.
Yards, 46-50 Dock Place, Newark.
Mills, Elk Mountain Village, Essex County.

The name A. MacDonald was written in a legible hand of unusual character.

There is an undefinable flavor of personality about

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even the driest of business communications, and by many trifling but insignificant touches does a correspondence sketch the unknown correspondent until the cumulative effort is a clear mental concept of person impressed upon each recipient.

When these two correspondents come face to face, the mutual concepts may or may not be verified. Curiously enough, some people can convey by word of pen a graciousness which they are not able to sustain by word of mouth, while the crudeness of others' written speech is mollified by adroitness of personal manner and softness of eye to an effort of pleasing frankness.

Nevertheless, it will remain true that every impression one can make corresponds to some phase of soul, and latent capacities expressed in no other way are sometimes expressed in a letter.

A. MacDonald, while conveying the instructions of the chief, conveyed also an impression of distinct personality, clear-headed, well-bred, compact, and most of all, delicate and unsordid. Enoch Holme, young, college-bred but unlettered, country-bred but not rustic, stern, simple, ambitious, sat at his rough table in a shanty in the woods, and looked at the latest communication from Hollister & Hollister. It was evening. The men of the camp were asleep in their bunks up-stairs, miles of frozen white forest between them and civilization.

"Mr. Hollister wishes you to assume complete control of the operations in the Blue Mountain contract" [it read], "and has complete confidence that whatever changes you may make in the administration of the job, will be for the best. The contract with Hartle, as per our last letter.

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has been annulled on account of non-fulfilment of conditions undertaken by him, and the undertaking will therefore fall into your hands to underlet or directly control as you find desirable.

"The company wish me to extend to you their compliments upon your prompt, loyal, and disinterested action in the late disorder. It has been noted that you have shown an unusual degree of fitness for your present position. I beg to remain, sir,

"Sincerely yours,

"ALISON MACDONALD, Secretary.

"(For Hollister & Hollister.)"

There were two circumstances that made this letter, to Enoch, remarkable, and caused him to ponder over it so long and earnestly. It was now twelve o'clock, midnight, and by four o'clock his men would be stirring and up for the day's work. Notwithstanding, Enoch sat in heavy clothes, with no thought of bed, his great brow resting on his hand, with the green-shaded lamp casting a sickly light upon his strong-bearded young face. It was not the circumstance of his promotion to the company's notice and favor, nor the increased emolument, nor the strange disorders that had led to these changes that now occupied his mind, but two apparent trivialities. First, the fact that the secretary's name was signed Alison, in place of the colorless and neutral A. that had always served before to introduce the cognomen; second, that a little slip of paper had been enclosed, evidently by mistake, containing what seemed to be a memorandum for private use.

The handwriting was the same legible character as the well-known signatures, but reduced in size to fit the tiny slip—a reduction which lent it an air

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of intimate confidingness. These were the jottings, in the absurd juxtaposition that familiarity with one's self brings about, to one's entire unconsciousness:

"Mend Mary's doll,
Browning Tues. night.
Receipt for johnny-cake from Aunt Lucy,
Swâmi,
New saucepan,
Hat for Lohengrin."

Over this Enoch mused, smiling at times, and then frowning in self-rebuke.

A. MacDonald, how colorless, how passionless, how void! Alison MacDonald, how rich, how piquant, how rare!

The memorandum had given away the writer's sex. Though not necessarily inculcating, it was suspicious. A person burdened with such various responsibilities as the "mending of Mary's doll," Browning on a Tuesday night, a receipt for johnny-cake, a Swâmi (whatever that might be, he, she, or it), a new saucepan, and a hat for Lohengrin (who was Lohengrin, and why did he need a hat, and why must *A. MacDonald* purchase its outfit?)—such various burdens belong only to the gentler sex. Even Enoch, with his primitive notions of woman's sphere and his limited knowledge of woman's activity, knew this.

Alison MacDonald was a woman. She had a Mary, and Mary had a doll, and the doll was broken. The broken doll was not to be thrown away, but to be mended. Admirable economy, Alison!

Alison reads Browning, belongs to a Browning club, which meets on Tuesdays. She is apt to forget

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those Tuesdays, or she would not make the memorandum. Therefore she is not overfond of Browning. She is young, or she would not read Browning. The picture grows clearer, and Enoch's smile deepens.

She is domestic, or she would not interest herself in johnny-cake. He likes her better. And what a dear, fat, motherly creature is Aunt Lucy! Alison's mother is dead, or she would not need to go to Aunt Lucy for recipes. Swâmi! Lohengrin! These lent an agreeable mystery to the unknown one's life. And what a varied life it was! All this beside the secretaryship, Browning, saucepan, Lohengrin's hat, johnny-cake, dolls, and letters for Hollister & Hollister.

"You are a fool," said Enoch, aloud to himself. "A. MacDonald is a man, and this is his wife's memorandum."

Then he looked at the slip again, and laughed aloud.

"She is a widow-woman of forty, and Mary is her twelve-year-old child."

Nevertheless, he pictured to himself a clear-eyed girl of twenty, with tapering fingers and a mellow, sympathetic voice. He envied Hollister & Hollister their private secretary.

Imaginative people live dual lives, one of reality, the other of their dreams. Sometimes their lives are many, depending on how many avenues of thought have been potentially opened to them. Enoch led two lives, the life of the present and of the future. The one vivified the other, but in them both he was alone. Now dimly he saw a new life, in which he was no longer alone. He caught a fleeting glimpse of slim

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hands, of eyelids bent over Browning, of a white apron fluttering from saucepan to stove. Swâmi and Lohengrin! There were mysteries in the new life which his experience could not interpret. As a vision unrolled before him, he saw a vast complicated pattern of people weaving in and out upon a plain, the heads of each one full of strange thoughts unguessed by the others, the feet of each one following strange paths untrod by the others, the eyes of each one guided by wandering stars, unseen by the others, and the paths of those that stand leagues apart converge and meet, while paths that lie side by side continue, but meet never. Side by side but a planet away! Enoch put out his hand. Far, far away, towards the horizon, he caught glimpses of a little path winding around a blossoming hill. And a woman's figure follows that winding path—nearer and nearer she comes. The wet blossoms fall upon her hair as she brushes the branches. He rises, both arms outstretched to meet her. He hears the rustle of delectable garments. . . .

There is the vigorous thumping of stove-lids and the thunder of logs tumbled into the cavernous depths of the stove. The shanty-cook is making the fire for breakfast. Clip, clip, goes his knife on the table, striking through the white round of the pork. Another day of work has begun. Enoch lifts his head from his desk. To what magic land has that grimed and bitten board upon which his head has rested been the portal, and the open sesame, this slip of paper! He folded it away into an inner pocket, as the clatter of boots down the narrow stairs announced the arrival to breakfast of his crew.

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Enoch went out to break the ice in the barrel by the door. He dipped his basin into the water and plunged his face into the icy bath, while the last stars of morning glimmered coldly over the tops of the dark spruce forest.

C

CHAPTER IV

Sararose

SHE stood still, her watering-pot in her hand, while the sun, risen behind a stand of young birches on the other side of the road, caught her copper-colored hair and turned it to flame about her forehead. What matter that the geraniums were dry and the sweet-pea vines that clambered over the white-painted porch were half watered, or that, within, a round of household duties awaited her. A wood-thrush sang, and Sararose listened.

Daddy Holme sat on the lowest step of the porch, a blue-checked apron spread over his knees, and a shining tin pan clasped between them. Beside him on the ground was a basket of peas, fresh pulled from the vines. The musical staccato of the peas tinkling into the pan blended in Sararose's ears with the orchestral harmony of the sweet morning.

"It's goin' to be hot as blazes," piped Daddy, plaintively, running his thin fingers down the opened hollow of a pod.

He looked up for an answer, but Sararose had disappeared around the corner of the house. Daddy leaned back against a post, and his fingers wandered comfortably among the cool green peas. He aban-

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doned himself to pleasant idleness. Sararose returned briskly.

"Daddy, could you get me some new potatoes for dinner? There's a row of them might just as well be thinned out in the back garden."

"I dunno as I could, dearie. The sun affects my head powerful, and it's hard work stoopin' over fer an old man like me. I ain't as young as I onct was."

Daddy Holme's aversion to labor was no less in his old age than it had been in robust young manhood, when he had married Jenica Renfrew, the sweet-voiced, strong-hearted village school-teacher, and settled down to a life of leisure on his half-cultivated farm lands. In another circle he would have been clubman and diner-out. In Elk Mountain he was a frequenter of the village grocery store and habitu   of the blacksmith shop when the stage from Loon Lake came in, and a rallying spirit for excursions to Windy Flanders, that prince of good fellows who bivouacked at the half-way house between Elk Mountain and Loon Lake.

Jenica Holme had continued her sway in the little red school-house, bringing also into the world four vigorous boys, all of them Scripturally christened, John, Enoch, Abner, Azrael, and with her last gift to humanity, a blue-eyed girl, she had folded her hands to sleep. Life had been a strenuous battle for her, and every one of her four sons bore the imprint of her vigorous nature and careful moulding. But the little girl, the picture of her father, had gone straight to the father's heart, and he cried out for a name of his own choosing, not the Biblical Sarah chosen by the mother, but Rose, a name of summer sweetness. With her last flickering breath Mrs.

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Holme called the little infant Sararose, and left her in her father's arms.

His bright spirits and love of beauty were still with him. His boon companions had mostly passed beyond, his own strength failed him for the accustomed haunts, and he busied himself from day to day with the care of a pet canary and with the endless cutting-out of paper dolls and the furnishing for them of gay garments in tissue paper.

"Sararose," he quavered, "a dish of peas and a good slice of ham oughter be enough fer anybody. It's goin' to be a hot day, too. Nobody has an appetite these dog-days."

Sararose, watering the geranium plants down the little walk to the gate, turned back to laugh.

"As far as I can see," she observed, "the boys have as much appetite in July as January."

Although the youngest was five years her senior, they were the "boys" to her. Her father had the hoe in his hard-worn hand, and with an obvious sense of martyrhood was slowly hobbling down the garden walk past the woodshed to the potato rows. Sudden compunction smote the girl.

"Daddy, I'll dig them; I don't mind," she cried, dropping her watering-can into a rose-bush and running after him.

The old man returned to his pea-pods with a gentle, contented murmur, half laughter, half syllabic, while Sararose dug in the potato-patch.

She was thin and tall, so thin and so tall that the country people said she looked as if you could break her in two. Her faded, clinging calico, its various colors blended to a general lilac, showed the modelling of her straight, slight figure, saved from angu-

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larity by a certain tenderness of outline and natural grace. There was some promise of future fulness in the gentle curve of the bosom. Her neck was long, her head was small and dainty, with its load of silken red hair. Her hair had no tendency to fluffiness, but lay in smooth lines, waving agreeably just above the ear. Her transparent skin showed blue veins on the temples. Her clear blue-green eyes were veiled by curling lashes of unusual length. It was a grief to her that they were not dark instead of pale brown.

The rich loam was still misted with bedewed laces from the night-weaving spiders. Sararose, upturning the pinky dimpled potatoes, sang, for it was the morning of life with her, and though her duties as housekeeper were heavy, they did not lie heavy on her shoulders. For when one is sixteen, and it is six in the morning, and a peabody bird is singing in a lilac-bush, trouble seems far away, and even the hot, busy noontide, with fumes of boiled dinner from a big cook-stove, seems as far removed as the valley from the top of Elk Mountain.

When Sararose returned to the front of the house, Daddy, who had fallen to day-dreaming, as was his wont when alone, or when disengaged from paper-doll creations, resumed somewhat briskly his task, and once more the peas rattled musically into the pan, and once more Sararose responded harmonically as she swept the piazza and tidied up the vines about the columns. Although she did not know it, she was a born musician, and perhaps one reason that she took the burdens of life so easily was that she set them always to some undertune about her. The swaying of the canary in its cage, the singing of the

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kettle on the stove, the creaking of a branch in the wind, the swish of the mowers in the field, all wove into some great symphony which seemed forever one with the thoughts of her head. The music that she responded to now was a livelier tune, that sent her heart pitter-patter—the beat of a horse's feet, galloping along the Saranac road. Tyke Loiseau swung into sight, mounted easily on his bay mare, the saddle-bags at his side. He paused, as Sararose expected, by the little white gate, and she, as Loiseau expected, ran down to meet him, her cheeks aglow—with the sweeping perhaps—and a smile on her lips.

"Don't forget the dance to-night," he said, though both of them knew that it was impossible for either of them to forget it.

"No, Tyke. What time will you come for me?"

"Seven o'clock, I reckon. I sha'n't get back from Saranac till nigh on to five. I'm going over there for a new scythe. One of the hands broke my best on a stone wall, like a dumb fool that he is."

"And, Tyke, will you buy me some green ribbon? I can't get any kind of match at Eddie's. Wait till I fetch you a sample from the house."

"Will you trust me to match it for you?" asked the delighted Loiseau, bending from his saddle to take the gauzy scrap of muslin into his sunburned hand.

"You couldn't match things better if you was a girl," responded Sararose, smiling up.

"That's because I'm a Frenchy, as the boys say. How's your father? Has he got anything new in polonaises?"

Daddy Holme's fad was a standing joke among the Elk Mountain young people. This question of

Sararose

Loiseau's was a familiar pleasantry, seasoned by long standing.

"Really," said Sararose, earnestly, "he has cut out a little pattern for a skirt that is just a beauty. It has ruffles running up to a point, so, and ruches of white tissue paper on the edge, and I have made my green muslin like it with white Valenciennes—"

"Valen—what?" laughed Loiseau, for it was considered clever in Elk Mountain to affect ignorance of the gentle art of dress-making, though there were few men who had not learned by maturity, from the inevitable experience of long winter evenings, when the village seamstress took her turn at their house and held the place of honor by the "settin'-room" stove, the general import of biases and gores and "fellin' down a seam."

"You'll be a picture in it, however it's made," he responded. "Never mind about the money. I don't bother with small change."

He waved his hand to her as he galloped off.

"At seven o'clock," he called back. "Be sure you're ready for me," which in Elk Mountain was a not ungallant reminder of feminine weakness.

Sararose hummed a bar of "After the Ball," which had just become epidemic in the mountains, some five years after it had passed the contagious point in the cities of the West. Her mind was full of the coming festivity and of Tyke Loiseau, always leading spirit in the gayety of the mountains. He was different from many of the young men she knew, for his manners were distinguished by an in-born grace, and his chivalry was of a finer sort than is usual among rustic beaux. His fiery temper, also, was spoken of with bated breath. Indeed, the Loi-

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seau temper was a tradition ever since the days of his great-grandfather, Philippe Loiseau, "The Firebrand," who had emigrated from France, as the story went, for the slaying of a grandee who had insulted a woman. To Sararose, Tyke was gentleness itself. The motherless young girl, slight of figure, and delicate featured, and head of the household among her four great brothers, appealed to Loiseau and called out all that was best in him. And Sararose secretly gloried in having attached to her following a descendant of the redoubtable Firebrand, and one whose "spirity ways" commanded consideration.

The peas began to follow each other merrily once more as Sararose approached the porch.

"Hev you ever thought," asked Daddy, "how you'd like to be a city folk? I calc'late they're still abed and asleep down at the Hollister Camp, and here we've been about and a - stirrin' since sun - up. I shouldn't wonder a mite if Colonel Hollister could pay a man jist to set still and fan him all day. And they says as Mis' Hollister hez her coffee brought to her in bed and the young leddies hez more dresses than they c'd pack in a day, and they don't never button their shoes theirselves."

The opening of the Hollister Camp had been that summer's great event at Elk Mountain. For some years it had been closed, the Hollisters seeking their summer outings in Europe or at sea-shore resorts.

The old man's delicate fingers fluttered for an empty pod that had fallen among the peas, and his smooth, bald, well-shaped, florid head, with the pink frosted cheeks and shiny sunken-in lips, might easily have belonged to an epicurean first-nighter in the front row of a "Made in London" vaudeville.

Sararose

"I never thought much about it," Sararose answered, indifferently, as she went into the house. Her sewing-machine was soon a-whirring, and the green muslin ruffles began to froth up at the edges like waves breaking on a rock.

Jenica Holme had bequeathed to her sons a legacy more precious than land or money—a high sense of honor and the quality of sympathy. They had always been very tender with the little sister, shielding her as well as they might, in their rude way, from hardship, and assuming many duties that the masculine character is prone to ignore. When the harvest hands were on, Azzy would help her over the stove and the dishpans, and on washing day, even Enoch had been known to lend his presence at the wringer.

Enoch Holme stood out among the brotherhood as the man of mark. He had steadily worked his way upward through the schools of the neighborhood and the high-school at Saranac, under his mother's guidance and inspiration, till he was ready for college. Then two years of unremitting labor, lumbering and milling, enabled him to spend the next year at college—a little country college in an old town with an unpronounceable Indian name, beloved by foreigners. He had just received ordination as a minister of the gospel after a further two years' course at the Methodist college when he was called home by the marriage of John, the oldest brother, which occasioned a redivision of family responsibilities. John took the Holme farm proper, where his efficient wife was a far more potent economic factor than dreamy, smiling Sararose could ever have been. Enoch took the timber land that stretched well up Elk Mountain and the little white cottage on Saranac road, with its few

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outlying acres of vegetable garden and strawberry-beds. Abner, according to season and needs, would live with Enoch or John. In the sugaring season he was in the bush. Azzy was an expert sawyer at Hollister's Mills and Sararose's right-hand man at the cottage.

Both Enoch and Ab were much in the woods, Enoch having been made forester for their county. Years before a daring exploiter of summer resorts had bought from the Holme estate a bit of land well up on the mountain, and set thereon a Swiss chalet, wide-piazzaed and deep fire-placed, which, however, before its completion, had been abandoned. The road that had been cut to it was reclaimed by the forest, and the underbrush closed in around the unfinished chalet. Approach to it became so difficult to remember that it had been nicknamed "Lost Inn," and here, even of winter nights, Enoch and Ab, when felling timber or tenting in the woods, had the habit of making themselves roughly comfortable.

At twelve o'clock Sararose had set on the table the dish of steaming stew, the little potatoes, with the thin, brown jackets splitting on their sleek, salmon-pink sides, and a bowl of peas at each plate. The family sat down. Daddy, his paper dolls neatly folded away in a large dry-goods box, sat shining at the head, and Enoch, big, Olympian, and intense-eyed, faced him at the other end. Azzy, his loose flannel shirt displaying a sunburned neck, fell to with a zest, while Sararose, in a way that the women folks have, fluttered about from stove to table, while the boys, in a way that men folks have, urged her to sit down and begin. She continued, imperturbably, filling the pots and pans and leaving them to soak in the copper

Sararose

sink, washed her hands, disappeared into the bedroom to rearrange her hair, and then reappeared at her place in her lilac frock, as fresh and unconcerned as if she had never dreamed the uses of frying-pans and kettles.

"Bravo," said Azzy; "you're a game one, Sararose. I'll bet June Hollister doesn't look no prettier when the high-up flunky pulls out the chair for her at luncheon."

"Luncheon," in the accent of a "native," was, the word alone, enough of a *bon-mot* to start a series of witticisms. John had for several years been one of the hotel guides, and had initiated his own family into many of the mysteries of "behind the scenes" in a city camp, to the huge delight of his auditors.

"But Mis' Hollister doesn't have to wait on herself," remarked Sararose, holding her plate out to Enoch for some stew.

"Aw, pawdon," exclaimed Azzy, his blue eyes laughing and rising. He handed her the plate with an elaborate flourish.

"What's going on to-night, Sararose?" asked Enoch, looking at the heap of muslin by the sewing-machine in the front room.

Sararose blushed. She had half hoped that Enoch would stay up at Lost Inn till Sunday, for it was always a conflict between their wills when she went to a dance. There had been no absolute precedent established, for sometimes one side would effect a compromise, sometimes the other. Sometimes there would be a promise that she would only dance the square dance, or that she would come home at eleven, or, oftener, she would go to spend the night at a friend's house, and let Enoch remain altogether in

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ignorance of the projected frivolity. In her deception she was always abetted by Ab and Azzy, who, standing also in awe of Enoch's goodness, did not share the Puritanic rigor of his views.

Sararose to-day foresaw a struggle and dreaded it. Before she answered, she briefly balanced the merits of a little clever hypocrisy or absolute frankness. There is nothing more trying to one's virtue than to be overawed by a conscience not one's own.

"Just a new dress, Enoch," she answered. "Summer's coming on, and I wanted something thin and pretty for Sundays."

Still blushing, she looked down at her plate, rapidly swallowing spoonfuls of peas without tasting them.

Enoch, though stern, was unsuspicious. His was too large a nature to follow up petty details. Azzy, however, noticed the conscious blushes, and hastened to ask Enoch when the next revival meeting was to be. Enoch, upon his return from Hartle's Camp, had reorganized the long-fallen-apart church community of the mountains. Many years before, when the iron-mines of the region had been worked, the bishop of the diocese had founded a little mission at Elk Mountain, but it had proved an almost impracticable field. There were such varieties in sect among the miners, and the preachers who were strong enough to appeal to them invariably found themselves called to a "larger usefulness." For many years there had been no church services whatever within a radius of ten miles of the Elk Mountain neighborhood. The nearest church was at Saranac, fifteen miles distant.

As a curious development, denominationalism had almost died out, and the little church that Enoch

Sararose

planted, though nominally Methodist, in reality belonged to no sect whatever. He preached Christ to them without thought of creed or doctrine, and, what is more unusual, without salary or perquisites of office. For the last week he had been conducting revival meetings near Loon Lake, some sixteen miles away, hoping to draw in some of the rough guides and trappers, sparsely scattered about Spriggs's Corners, as the settlement was called.

Azzy's question surprised Enoch.

"The next revival meeting? Why, this evening, Azzy. Aren't you coming, and you, Sararose? You're not too tired, little sister?"

"Where?" exclaimed Azzy and Sararose in one breath.

"At Spriggs's."

There was no concealing the matter any further. It would out, whether or no.

"Enoch," cried Sararose, "some of the young folks is giving a dance there to-night, and I was going with Tyke Loiseau."

A few minutes of uncomfortable silence followed, during which Sararose glanced at her brother several times, while Azzy ate his rhubarb pie unconsciously, for it wasn't his funeral yet, as he assured himself, and Daddy, who had left the table, sat on his stool against the wall, cutting out of brown paper a design that might have been a Russian redingote.

If Enoch was impressive in his every-day words, as people truthfully agreed, he was a bit awesome when wrathful or gloomy. His strange, unfluctuating mouth and heavy chin were like a calm, great animal's, that thinks and watches, but does not feel. His most noticeable feature was the fine, massive,

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protuberant forehead, with its loose mat of fawn-colored hair, and, beneath the bushy, fawn-colored eyebrows, the deep-set, blue eyes, that almost hurt with their keenness. When he joined in gayety those eyes twinkled with the most compelling humor; when his heart overflowed they were large and limpidly blue with womanly tenderness; when he was stirred with anger or "indignation," as he would have termed it, they narrowed and flashed like knife-blades.

His bright-brown beard had been close-cropped since the winter's rough life, and showed the modelling of the strong, homely features. Smooth-shaven, his face might almost have been an actor's, there was such play of expression over the features as he talked, and in repose such lines as mark a man of many emotions. A man of many emotions Enoch Holme was. Born of an intellectual and supersensitive mother, these qualities in him were tempered by the hard and prosaic environment of the mountains, and conflicted also with the abounding sense of good comradeship and the Greek love of the beautiful that came to him from his father. He was made to be a leader among men. He felt within himself at times the fierce outcry of energy going to waste, and yet he seemed pinned down to a barren future.

He had always been somewhat out of sympathy with his kin, and they with him. The ruthless desire, actuated often by conscience, to impose his sense of right upon them had been the cause of many a bitter contest. His love for his dead mother and for his sister Sararose were the great loves of his life. The love of any other woman he had never known, nor had he ever laid eyes on a woman to think of her a second time.

Sararose

Finally he spoke: "Do you mean to say, Sararose, that there's to be a dance at Spriggs's, and that you're going, when all the week you've been too tired to go to meeting even once?"

Sararose quailed before him.

"And as to the dance, how is it, Azzy? I've engaged that hall from Spriggs for two weeks running, and no one else has a right."

"There's been a mistake somewhere, Enoch. I know he promised it to the boys a good bit back. He never thought of your holding meetings the whole week through. You know you've never done it before."

"What difference?" asked Enoch, sharply. "If I'm able to preach seven nights in the week, and the people able to hear me, why shouldn't it be? I can't refuse them the word they're starving for."

"It's too bad," remarked Azzy, "but you might as well save yourself the journey to-night."

"You don't know me, Azrael. I shall go there to preach, dance or no dance. It's God's providence that 'll bring so many more than usual to hear me. Those that come to dance may stay to pray."

His look was steel now, and the long, firm mouth closed like a vise.

"Enoch, please, please don't go," begged Sararose, her eyes filling with tears. "I'm afraid there'll be trouble."

"How about you?" he asked, keenly.

"I don't know what you mean," she faltered.

"You going?"

"I—I must go—to the dance, Enoch. I've promised Tyke."

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Enoch brought his fist down upon the table so that the empty dishes rattled.

"As surely as you go to dance, I go to preach."

Sararose was crowding back the sobs, as she poured a kettle full of boiling water into her dish-pan. Enoch had come near and was watching her, tenderly now, his eyes a little misted as he saw her chin quivering. Yet she would not say what she knew he yearned to have her, that she would go with him to the meeting and refuse to dance with Tyke Loiseau.

"A promise is a promise," she kept thinking to herself. How much more agreeable, anyway, to be whirled about in Tyke's strong arms to the merry fiddle music than to share a hymn book with a muffy old woman and drone out "Hallelujah, 'tis dohun; I believe in the Sohun."

Enoch moved away from her again and walked restlessly up and down in the front room. She could see him running his fingers through his shaggy hair, and his lips were moving. Was he praying or only thinking of himself?

"What are you going to do, Azzy?" she whispered.

The young fellow had taken a towel, and was drying the plates.

"There'll be the devil to pay, for Hartle's head and front at the dances — and since that row in the woods—" Azrael whistled.

"Oh, dear!" Sararose sank down in the kitchen rocker and burst out crying.

How peaceful and happy everything had been in the early morning, and now there was this dreadful cloud on her horizon. She knew she was disloyal,

Sararose

but she did wish she hadn't a lay preacher for a brother.

Enoch was kneeling by her side now and put his arms about her.

"There, there, little sister," he said, smoothing her hair as he laid her head on his shoulder. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world, dearest. I didn't mean to speak so harshly. I love you. I love you."

He laid his cheek against hers in silence, while Daddy crooned cheerfully over his pink tissue redingote.

"You may stay where you please to-night. Don't go out at all. I'd rather think of you as quietly at home with father."

Enoch anticipated some rough opposition at the hall, and was unwilling that Sararose should even be spectator. As she did not answer, he spoke again.

"You will stay at home for my sake, dearest?"

Sararose was never the soft little thing that one naturally supposed her. Enoch took his arm away from her and stood up.

"Sararose," he spoke autocratically, "answer me!"

She hardened as she felt his will assert itself over her. She stood up, too, calm after her crying, and the steely look in his eyes made her more determined.

"I shall keep my promise, Enoch," she said, her cold little hands tight clenched at her sides, "and go to—to the dance with Tyke Loiseau."

Azzy had finished the dishes, and hung up the pan to dry above the stove. He had witnessed such scenes before, and knew that intervention was futile.

"Then," said Enoch, in a tone like blue ice, "I forbid you."

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He had swiftly reasoned out to himself the state of mind on Sararose's part, whimsical, wavering, uncertain, that needed but this assumption of firmness from him to save her from herself. That dancing was wrong, that under these particular circumstances it savored even of irreverence, he was certain. Sararose's lips quivered.

"Enoch," she cried, and sank down on her knees against the table, wildly crying.

Then Daddy arose, letting the scissors fall from his knees.

"You shall go, Sararose," he thrilled, but with a tone of authority. "Enoch, who are you to set yourself up over my daughter and her comings and goings?"

Somehow the old man had felt that this austere son did not belong to him.

"Daughter, you may go and dance all ye please and enjoy yourself. Nobody shall say ye nay."

Daddy's unusual dignity made its impression.

"May I, Enoch?" asked Sararose, raising her tear-stained face from the table.

"You may do as your father wishes," he answered, without looking at her.

Seizing his hat, he strode out of the house.

CHAPTER V

A Sermon and a Dance

WHERE the Elder River road cuts in across the Loon Lake road is Spriggs's store. Here one may buy postage - stamps, series of ten years before, calicoes in patterns favored by the last generation, and chocolate rats, date unknown. The store is the dignified feature that makes of the scattered houses within four miles a unit and graces them, collectively, with the name of Spriggs's Corners. Above the store is a large attic, used in turn for political primaries, meeting-house, and dance-hall. Every one of these purposes is provocative of a fight, as aftermath, a fight being the chief social relaxation of the "mountain."

In the great unsealed attic, the light flared duski-ly through lanterns hung from the rafters. Seed-corn, strung up to dry, grinned uncannily among the cobwebs of the eaves.

"It amamounts to jest this," said Joc Hartle, in a rasping voice. "Is you or me master up here? and I reckon we've got to settle it somehaow."

Zuba Spriggs, who had been pacing up and down the floor, scattering the white soap behind her in flakes, stood with her full bare arm still upraised, like Demeter arrested at seed-time. Her cotton dress, tucked up about her waist in Greuze loops, had faded

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from turkey red to a delicious cerise. The blowsy red of her cheeks and the red lantern light on her hair made her a magnificent study in color.

"God is master here to-night, Joe," said Enoch Holme, in his great open-air voice, "not you, nor I, nor any other man."

The two parties stood ranged against each other, Enoch, the mountain preacher, six feet two in his stocking feet, and his two brothers, Ab and Azzy. Ab, big and brawny, with long Mexican mustaches and loosely-smiling mouth, ponderous in his movements as in his mirth, habitually disinclined to wrath as a waste of energy, but, when called upon to exert himself, a centre rush that would have made a football team memorable. Azzy was only a feather-weight, but agile and trim, and, as the boys would have expressed it, "fit as a fiddle."

With his hand on the melodeon, which he had been in the act of moving, stood Joe Hartle, long and lanky, his bleached mustache white against his burned face, with a reach to his arms that would have equalled Briareus, and a command of invective almost as comprehensive. Since the trouble at the winter camp he had been Enoch's bitter enemy. Near him was Eddie, store-keeper of Elk Mountain, the gay Lothario of the neighborhood, and reputed a boxer of prowess. He was short and thick-set, with a knowing air to the very cut of his chin-whiskers and the swing of his arms. His mere entrance into a room was a witticism, and his first word would arouse a titter of laughter.

Zuba Spriggs and Nance Hartle, retired into the fortresses of the caves, sat on a hogshead together in awed anticipation of the blow-out.

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"Hold on, boys," said Spriggs's nasal voice.

The little store-keeper, yellow and wrinkled as a yesterday's slapjack, peered between the shoulders of the Holme brothers. The loud altercation had aroused him from his slumber behind the counter.

"You kin blame it all on me," he went on, pacifically. "I promised the hall to Enoch for his revivals every night this week, so he ain't tryin' fer to make trouble. And I clean forgot that 'twas promised a month back to youse for yer dance. They ast it from me a good bit back, Enoch."

He appealed to Enoch as the pious man of the crowd. Enoch seemed about to answer, but a sound on the stair arrested his attention.

"No, no, I won't come up now; it's so early," said Sararose's voice. "Please, I'll stay here awhile and visit with Mrs. Spriggs. The girls has to come down and dress yet."

If Enoch had been before in a mood to be placated, he did not look so now, for the long mouth was drawn to a line, and his face was immovable.

Sararose's sweet, clear tones were followed by Loiseau's less distinguishable bass, and Enoch set his teeth as he spoke.

"I don't say whose fault it is, Mr. Spriggs, but it 'll be my fault if I don't do my duty in this hall to-night."

"And your duty is to go about your business, you bull-voiced, cantin' exhorter, you!" roared Joe Hartle, shaking his fist in Enoch's face with the unnecessary vehemence of one who trembles for his cause.

"Don't youse go to fight it aout, boys. It wouldn't be seemly, nohow. Blame it on me."

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"Blamin' ain't going to settle the mux," cried Loiseau, savagely, pushing into the room, "but some-thin' a blamed sight better nor blamin'. Dance we was goin' to in this hall to-night, and dance we wull!"

His voice rang like an anvil on iron, and the two girls on the hogshead clasped each other apprehensively. Joe's coat was already off, but he soon stripped himself of his vest also. His faded flannel shirt displayed an Adam's apple large as an egg.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I'll fight either on ye single and Azzy thrown in."

Enoch stepped forward into the middle of the room.

"Naow don't, boys," pleaded Spriggs, plaintive as an accordion.

"'Tain't none of your consairn, Spriggs," said Loiseau, scornfully. "Ye hain't no more good with them two than a picked chicken in a cock-fight."

But Enoch stood with his arms folded as Joe hurled forward.

"What's the matter with ye? Ain't we goin' to fight fer it? Have ye guv in already?"

"I'm not here to fight, but to preach," he replied, calmly.

"Ye don't say so?" came Eddie's retort, in his mutton-tallow voice.

"He'll preach to the tune of the fiddlin'," whispered Nance Hartle.

"And we're here to dance. How's that?" replied Loiseau, with undisguised irony.

"I don't deny you the right to dance," said Enoch. "And you don't deny me the right to preach. Is that fair?"

"Sure," sneered Eddie. "The lancers begins at eight. Ye kin hev your service afore that."

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"And after, too, if you all agree," answered Enoch, smoothly. "When your friends arrive, and mine, we'll put the question to them, and you'll take their say-so, eh, Joc Hartle, and you, Loiseau?"

Enoch glanced around the circle of his opponents with ominous serenity. They all burst into laughter.

"It's ten to one against the preacher," remarked Eddie, *sotto voce*.

"Agreed," cried Joc Hartle. "Whatever the biggest part of them wants we'll give them, and there's an end to 't."

"No, sir," Enoch's voice was unrelenting. "If there's one poor soul that would rather dance, I'll quit preaching and go home."

Loiseau dropped a mock courtesy, plucking at the air on each side of him like a girl holding up her skirts. He had the suppleness of a French dancing-master.

"Exhortin' versus the polka," he laughed. "I bet that we dance to hell for all ye, Enoch Holme. Why, the hull mounting-side is comin' to our dance, and thar ain't nobody but a parcel of women-folks and deaf old men that comes to your revivals."

"Except such of his own folks as he leads by the string," finished Eddie, in his woolliest voice, but a sudden right-hander from Azzy sent him spinning against the wall and gasping for breath.

"You—you—you—" he struggled ineffectually, making for Azzy with a threatening gesture.

Enoch stepped in between them.

"There, there," he said, quite as if he were soothing two turbulent children, and Eddie retired, a little too speedily for honor, but none too soon to escape Azzy's imminent punishment.

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The Holme brothers, except Enoch, were wild enough fellows in their way, but when the honor of any one of them was to uphold, loyalty was the watchword of the clan. The world, the flesh, and the devil set blithely about their work once more while the Holme trio stationed themselves by the door. Enoch took out his pocket Testament and read.

"Lemme go there, you, Eddie," came Nance Hartle's thin voice. "Don't you be fooling raound laike all possessed."

She gave him a little, ineffective push.

"I wasn't agoin' to hurt ye, Nance."

"You fellers jest git that melodium into place." Zuba's round voice matched her arms in girth and decision. "Kint you see it's hint side afore?"

"Come on, Tyke," called Joe. "Them's orders. She's boss in here all right, I guess."

Glances were cast now and then at the grim trio by the door. There was something sinister in their silence, like the death's-head at the feast. The people began to stream into the dimly lighted attic, singly, by twos, and in bunches. The godly and ungodly found themselves side by side and participants in what promised to be a notable occasion. Enoch, with a hand-grasp and a word of reassurance, welcomed his own people. The function at Spriggs's Corners, as a rule, began with perspiring and sticky silence, and ended with boisterous horse-play. This evening there was a subdued murmur from the seats that lined the room, and a lively buzz from among the hogsheads and packing-boxes, where the gayest of the maidens were disposing of their wraps. It was a warm night in July, warm for the mountains, and the girls were decked out in muslins and dimities,

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while some few of the more modish among them wore ready-made shirt-waists and black skirts, a startling innovation in Elk Mountain, where fashions are modified loathly.

It was a rough and simple community, descended from the miners of thirty years before. The mining had long been abandoned, and the rude prosperity accompanying it had likewise slipped away. Here and there, on the shores of lonely lakes, or by some foaming river, were deserted villages, mere cobwebs of time, clinging to the hill-side. The miners' descendants, those not possessing the energy or the means to move away, still clung to the soil and, intricately intermarried within the difficult limits of range, eked out a penurious livelihood. The unintelligible gayety of summer campers, secluded by Lake Miquewauga, at the foot of Elk Mountain, was the only glimpse they had of the outside world, a world they regarded with mingled indifference and scorn.

"Sararose!" exclaimed Enoch, as a slight figure in green muslin stood at the top of the crooked stairs.

Her head, with its burden of copper-red braids, drooped like a hot-house rose on its stem. Her skin had the alabaster whiteness that sometimes goes with her shade of hair.

"So you have come to—to the dance, I suppose." He held her little slender hand in his brotherly grasp.

The pink color mantled her whiteness as she trembled out a "Yes."

"But you will stay to hear me preach, Sararose?" He dropped her hand, but looked at her with a sort of unearthly pity. His hard and tender moods followed each other like sun and shower across the peaks.

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She laughed a little, hanging her head.

"Don't be a lost lamb, Sararose." The words had no sound of cant from his lips. The colloquy was cut short by Loiseau, who appeared at Sararose's side, and, brusquely seizing her hand, said:

"Come, Sararose, we want you for our set. It's jest formin'."

The girl held back for a moment, looking pleadingly at her brother. But he had turned away and was talking to a woman in a black scuttle bonnet tied with magenta ribbon. She was one of the pillars of the revival meetings. The walls were lined with their complement of early-comers, and irregular groups were standing or sitting about the room. Loiseau and Hartle had resolved upon a master-stroke. Loiseau stepped upon the platform and clapped his hands.

"Friends and neighbors, it's eight o'clock, an' the fiddlers ain't come; so we hev another treat for ye. Holme's invited himself here with some of his prayer-meetin' folks, an' he's goin' to exhort. Step up, brother. Ye'll find the sheep on yer right hand and the goats on yer left."

A loud guffaw greeted this sally, for so indeed had the two parties ranged themselves. Enoch stood on the platform, severe and unsmiling, but with that steely light in his eyes which meant battle.

"He's goin' to bluff it, you bet," whispered Zuba Spriggs. "My, won't it be fun?"

Enoch knew every man and woman before him. There are as many clans and cliques in the Elk Mountain range as between the east and west sides of Manhattan Island, as many shades of religion and of moral conviction. The most divergent of these clans

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were represented that night at Spriggs's Corners. Every man and woman knew the preacher. They knew him for a lumberman and hunter, for a fisherman and farmer. They knew that he could drive the ploughshare as straight as he could expound a text. The most reckless of them did not care to trifle with him when the steely gleam was in his eye. After the laughter and bustle had subsided, he began:

"I'm here to talk to you about God, to let God speak through me to the souls of you all."

His words were borne down by an avalanche of contemptuous laughter.

"You jest keep yer mouth shut," said Loiseau to Eddie, who was about to add his voice to the hurly-burly. "It's not our time now. Give him fair play, and let him show his hand."

"Good," answered Hartle. "It 'll be a bitter pill fer him to swallow, anyway we fix it. Gosh! what a blamed fool Enoch be!"

The laughter had died down, and Enoch, standing like a rock from which the tide had subsided, spoke again:

"You can laugh if you will, but it isn't the laugh that comes from the full heart you're laughing. It's the rattling of the hollow pod. But I shall say something to you that will not cause laughter."

The terrific solemnity of the man hushed them to expectancy.

"If a single man or woman of you opens his lips in laughter, I promise to keep silence forever."

If Enoch had understood his own psychology, he would have known he was gambling, and against heavy odds, but the fierceness of his own will intoxicated him like the fumes of the Pythoness. He fixed

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his eyes on his auditors as a jungle hunter on his prey. Sararose's sea-pool look swam with dread. Enoch lifted both hands in a gesture ponderous and pregnant.

"If God came down from heaven and stood among you, you would listen to Him. He is standing here. Listen to Him."

With hands still upraised, as if commanding silence, he appeared to listen. A tremendous roll of thunder broke among the hills. Half of the assemblage shivered.

"And the fool saith in his heart, '*There is no God.*'"

Not a sound thereafter disturbed the stillness. Enoch went on to expound the idea of divinity. Not theological, not even Scriptural, was his exposition. The reality of God he flashed before his hearers like a picture on a sheet. Hartle and Loiseau, watching the audience, were silent too. The very confidence of the man stupefied them.

It was a sermon never written out, and if here set down it would read like many others. But it was the winnowed wheat of many a day's threshing; many springs behind the plough in the stony corn-fields, many winters with the axe in the lonely timberlands, many summers with the scythe on the breezy meadows, were expressed into the essence of his thought. Often, as Enoch rode his horse home from far-away villages, God had seemed to walk beside him in the starry darkness; God had sung like a bird at dawning when the clouds tossed beneath him in the valley and Mount Marcy sprang into the fire of sunrise. A theologian would have said that he taught the Divine Immanence. A Greek would have called

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it Pantheism. The thought was as crystal from his lips as a spring from Elk Mountain. The people were fascinated, awed.

This, then, was Enoch's God, not Jehovah of the Prophets, nor the great, white Presence of Revelation, but a sort of vast, glorified man, who lived and moved among them, trod their smoking plough-lands, lifted the clouds for them in the early morning, and fell with the dew at night. A God who fashioned the twin-flower with delicate care and rejoiced in the wood-sorrel that reddened the forest-trails. "He knows the haunts of the deer by the lakes. He is acquainted better than you with seed-time and harvest. His are the cattle on a thousand hills."

Women with toil-hardened faces bent forward, lost in the idea of God. Young girls with parted lips gazed like persons in a trance. A personality that before had seemed as vague as the Khan of Tartary filled the room. Each one was alone with God, while Enoch's voice seemed a window behind which eternity lay. They did not even hear the storm that had come up, though the wind and rain beat against the little windows and slammed upon the roof. The fiddlers had crept quietly in and sat unnoticed by the door, their unused violins across their knees.

"And now, friends, good-night. Those who are dancers will stay and dance. Those who fear God will go home to bed and prepare for the Sabbath that God sends them."

Enoch stepped down from the platform and went quietly towards the door. He was followed by his own people and some others, all in nervous silence.

"This ain't no funeral," shouted Loiseau. "Fiddlers, strike up!"

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The violins began to squeak, the spell was broken. People began to talk and move about. Sararose, with her shawl and hat on, was moving timidly towards the door, but Loiseau was upon her like a hawk on a dove.

"Sararose, you ain't goin' home 'thout givin' me one single dance? 'Tain't late. There's heaps of time yet. Stay, I tell you, Sararose; ye don't know how much I want you," he stormed, pleaded, commanded, all in one breath.

"Oh, Tyke, I just can't stay and dance. I can't do it no more'n nohow, after that."

She shivered, and lifted her transparent, long-lashed eyes appealingly to the black ones bent above her.

Her brother's large figure stood back to her, but he heard every word by the two, and waited. Ab and Azzy had gone down-stairs to hitch the team.

"You've jest got to stay this time, Sararose, fer me. Jest a few minutes, an' I'll take you home."

Loiseau had her by the hand, and was drawing her with him towards the centre of the room. Enoch came back from the stairs and put his hand gently upon her shoulder.

"Which, Sararose—him or God?"

There was something in the question that stung Sararose to decision. Till then she had been yearning for Enoch's strong arms about her and for his loving approval. But it was not the decision that he strove to impose. Perhaps the too frequent alternative that Enoch offered her between his own will and God on the one hand, and her wishes on the other, offended by its arrogance.

"You, Tyke," she answered, recklessly.

Enoch, saddened more than angry, passed in silence

A Sermon and a Dance

out of the room. It cut him to the heart that the one he loved best in the world was unmoved by his influence; also his pride was hurt. Sararose threw herself into the gayety of the evening. Her transparent cheeks took on the most vivid color, and her gorgeous hair, loosened in lustrous folds, slipped downward, and bourgeoned out like an overblown Jacqueminot rose. It was thus that Richard Hollister saw her when he and John Holme arrived at Spriggs's. Young Hollister, anxious to see a "mountain shindig," had induced his guide to be cicerone for the occasion.

("Tiddle-dee-tee," sang the fiddles. "Swing yer partners.")

Hollister had both arms around Sararose, and was giving her the swing "approved" at Spriggs's, a dizzying affair of several minutes. Her eyes glowed like chrysoprase, and her flushed cheek lay on his shoulder.

"You will give me the next dance, Miss Holme?" whispered Hollister in her ear.

"It's a schottische. I don't know how," she whispered back.

(Grand right and left.)

"I'll teach you," he answered, as they passed, weaving in and out with hand-clasps. How soft and strong his hand was!

"I must go home. I told Tyke I was going two dances ago."

"Who is Tyke? That gay deceiver with the inky eyebrows? Why shouldn't I talk so if he tries to take you from me? Think how many dances you've danced with him, and only two with me. That's different, is it? You've known him always. Then you

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must let me make up for lost time. You will? Look at me just once, then."

Sararose's blossomy head drooped still lower, and her cheeks paled. Hollister was leading her to a seat, with his arms about her, also in "approved" mountain style.

"Sararose they call you? By Jove, you are a rose, though. Do you write it all as one? That's a way they have up here, is it? I declare, I like it. Write it down for me, and let me see how it looks. Now you must tell me where you live. I shall be coming to see you, you know."

Sararose raised her bright-lashed eyes for a liquid look at the young man. He was handsomer than any one she had ever seen. He had brimming-over brown eyes, and thick hair smoothly parted in the middle, but waving crisply at the edges around his neck, temples, and ears. His full, fluty lips were smiling, and there was a deep dent in the middle of his chin.

"Do you look at every man like that, Sararose? As I live, there must be broken hearts around Spriggs's Corners. Promise to save that look for me, Sararose, or I shall be jealous. There, that's our schottische."

(Tum-tee-tee-tum.)

The chatter ceased. The feet shuffled and slid. The violins were warmed up to their work, and thrilled the dancers with voluptuous inspiration.

"That's it--three slides this way. Now we waltz. What a sweet red rose she is!"

He folded her in for the tantalizing interludes. The smoky lanterns, the grinning corn, the rough rafters disappeared. Sararose's soul melted into motion.

CHAPTER VI

Storm and Clearing

LOON LAKE has a hotel, large, white-painted, many-galleried. Nurse-maids, with starched and curled infants in train, loiter along the ash-walks between geranium-beds, and very young men in plaid breeches follow the golf links all day in white-eyed silence. Frizzled ladies, with jetted bosoms and steep laps, fan themselves on an upper piazza overlooking the lake. Glossy and prosperous men, fastidiously sportsmanlike, pass in and out of the hotel office with guns and rods, always in the wake of a native guide, saturninely grim. But with the hotel acres, kitchen garden on the one hand, and scrubby orchard and pastures on the other, the work of the axe has ended. The bush begins. A few ragged farms struggle in the fringes of the timbered mountain-side.

Alison MacDonald and June Hollister had been spending the day at Loon Lake, and at about seven o'clock they left the hotel in a covered buckboard driven by Gene Lawless, who filled in his summer time as one of the hotel drivers.

Between Elk Mountain, at the foot of which is Lake Miquewauga, and Loon Lake the distance has never been accurately determined. It is anywhere from sixteen to twenty miles, according to the disposition and

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temper of the mountaineer inquired of. There are three halting-places on the way—Spriggs's Corners, Windy Flanders, and Lone Falls—and except these three no other nuclei of human habitation. The road is considered by summer visitors the most picturesque, and by natives the peskiest, on the range. The hills spring sheerly from under the carriage wheels, or slope graciously towards the horizon, as the defile grows wider or narrower. Oaks, sugar-maples, mountain-alders, and elderberry bushes cast by day a deep shade over the narrow road. Rough bridges span the occasional ravines, down which the runaway children of the mountain-springs fret their hearts out over stones and eddies.

A full moon was in promise, and both girls looked forward with zest to the long drive, especially Alison, who had a poet's love of lonely beauty.

Allowing ample time for all the difficulties of the route, hills, newly broken roads, mended roads—the mountain method of road-mending is a titanic play with loose bowlders—they had calculated to reach the camp by ten o'clock. They did not succeed in eliciting much information from the driver, who, with the customary reticence of a north mountaineer, was as obstinately dumb concerning local color and tradition as an author guarding the preserves of a new book.

"Look at that maple on the hill-side. What a barbaric splash of color!" exclaimed Alison.

"It's decayin', thet's what," Gene explained, with dry scorn. "Pesky things them soft maples is to raise."

"How the scene unrolls before one," Alison murmured half to herself, her mimetic, unconscious fin-

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gers signifying a scroll unwinding. They made a turn in the road that brought a new group of mountain scallops into view. "It is almost irreverence to pass through so quickly."

"We won't be goin' none too quick fer ye a spell further on," Gene responded. It was characteristic of him to show reticence when addressed, and loquacity otherwise. "We're comin' to the darndest hill on the hull range, and these horses don't road none too well."

They drove in silence for some time, Alison's thoughts very far in the future, as a girl's thoughts are wont to be, dwelling on the delights of many things, when Richard and she would be husband and wife. She had known him since they were children together, in houses that faced each other on one of New York's older streets. Colonel Hollister and Mr. MacDonald had been through the war together, and afterwards through the ups and downs of financial ventures, with never a break in their friendship, and the three children—Alison MacDonald and Richard and June Hollister—were so inseparable that the other children on the square called them the "Bunch." Even the misogynous age of fourteen Richard had passed through unscathed, still preferring, though secretly, the society of those two girls to that of his coeval in sex and age. Then came Richard at college, a different Richard from the preceding, but to Alison always the same. Alison, too, had her college life—a brief one—cut short by the great sorrow that left on her face the indelible record of experience. It was not the serious influence of a woman's college, nor yet her graver temperament, that made Alison so different—for instance, from June Hol-

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lister, who had grown up with her. As they sat together in the carriage, he who runs might have read the sad lines of Alison's face as contrasted with the handsome blankness of June's. The kind of sorrow had come into Alison's life about which people keep silence, when silence is kindest. It had been some years since Alison's bitter baptism, but the seal would always be on her forehead. Especially in repose one noticed the enduring pathos of the dark almond-shaped eyes. People would ask upon seeing her, "What has happened?" and ever after they would pity her for the story they would learn. With her friends Alison was cheerful, though not quite commonplace, but one always felt the undertone in her life. Instead of leaning on people for pity and love, she was naturally leaned upon, which was the result of her well-poised temperament and rich womanliness. She was happier now than she had been for three years. Time and love will do much.

After a while June spoke:

"Alison, Thomas Mayhew is coming up next week, head of Clough Hall, you know, on the east side. He's the ugliest man I ever saw, speaks broad Yorkshire like a story-book."

"I know of him. Some one told me he was the most interesting man in New York," Alison replied.

"Interesting?" June exclaimed. "He's a tombstone—a whole cemetery. Whether he talks or doesn't talk, you're no more to him than a worn-out epitaph. Takes the bit in his teeth if you'd let him, and all that sort of thing, you know. I have to pull hard to let him know I'm there, sometimes."

"June, June," sighed Alison, deprecatingly.

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"But, oh, he is a winner," June finished, helpless to express her opinion by anything less explicit.

June Hollister was conformed quite accurately to the popular conception of "summer girl." Rather, perhaps, the summer girl as a type has been deduced from such as she. Notwithstanding conversational inanity, she had the classic brow of a Parthenon goddess and the superb indifference of drooping lid and the finely turned chin that one associates with pen-and-ink illustrations of manufactured witticism. Alison, on the other hand, to whom, much against her will, all the camp had naturally yielded the palm for superior intellect, had the curves and dimples of a Hebe. Her black hair, instead of rippling in philosophical waves from a broad brow, crinkled like unbraided flax about the peculiar ovate of her olive face. She was a favorite subject for Dick Hollister's camera, when she sat in the sun drying her tresses, which stood out about her head in a startled aureole.

"A regular circus Wild Woman," June would teasingly say, "only you should not have Dante in your lap."

Then Hollister would steal it from her, dropping a French doll in its place, for there were always children in camp with dolls to be borrowed for the older folks' amusement, as Mrs. Hollister would placidly remark. Then snap would go the camera, and the picture would be complete.

The delicious mountain pinks of sunset faded into lilac over the undulating ranges; then Gene Lawless's unimaginative back was silhouetted against the lavender of the dying light. With its first white star, the purple of early evening lay over the velvet hills.

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"Do you hear the whippoorwill?" Alison murmured. "Twilight translated to sound."

"Where is it? It seems so near."

"There's another answering. Listen." Alison's voice had a way of melting into your sense while June's pattered upon it like a fountain on a stone.

The girls leaned out of the carriage to hear the plaintive strophe and antistrophe.

"You cain't never see them birds," Gene remarked. "They're dirt-colored critters that squat down in the grass. I've hunted for them high and low when I was a boy, and most laikely there was one not two feet from me."

Suddenly turning a corner, they came upon Spriggs's, with the light pouring out from the door upon the low platform, where a number of men sat with chairs tipped and feet up on the railing. A pasteboard figure of a laughing girl peeped impertinently from the side of a window.

"Do you want to stop hyar for anything?" inquired Gene, yearningly, whose soul was rent at the thought of wasting the opportunity for a brief chat with kindred spirits. He exchanged greetings with the men on the platform. He had halted before the door, and from an upper window came the sound of a deep voice upraised in exhortation.

"What's going on, Gene?" June inquired.

"It's either a shindig or a prayer-meetin', dependin' on which party comes out top o' the heap. Do ye want to rest ye a spell?"

"No, no, we must drive on, Gene," and he loathly hinted to the horses to "Git up."

"What time does the moon rise?"

"It oughter be moon-up by rights nigh onter half

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after eight, but by the looks of them mackerel clouds I seen this afternoon we ain't goin' to kitch no moon to-night. It's a deal sight likelier we'll hev a skite o' rain."

They were slowly climbing the long hill now, and June and Alison alighted to walk.

"When we get to Lone Falls," said Alison, with conscious folly, "let us leave the wagon for a few minutes and stand on the old bridge above the dashing rapids, and let the spirit of the deserted village creep over us."

June shuddered unsympathetically.

"I know, dear, but it is just that weird feeling it will be delicious to realize. The blind, forsaken mill, those gray-shuttered, swaying houses, and the tangle-overgrown streets."

June put out a practical, investigating palm, and looked upward.

"The rain is here," she exclaimed, as the decisive drop splashed on her nose. "Quick, Alison, before it pours!"

They clambered into the wagon as a terrific roll of thunder reverberated from the west.

"We are going to have a fearful storm," June said, as the snorting horses started on a gallop under the stimulation of Gene's whip.

"And you have nothing with you but that absurd pink jacket," said Alison, drawing her white sweater over her serge blouse.

The rain fell and the wind blew. Any one who has been caught in a mountain storm—and what visitor to the north woods has enjoyed immunity—knows the insulting virulence of the rain storms. One gradually loses all hope of protection, and sits resignedly

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in the midst of a pond, with the water dripping fatuously from above into the puddle of one's lap, and the rain pelting one's cheek and ear. And perhaps after a half-hour's deluge the sun will burst out, like a great baby playing peek-a-boo behind a mountain, and expect one immediately to respond with a smile.

But this storm was not easily placated. Vast slanted water sheets flung themselves on this side and on that of the buckboard with fiercest fury. The very heavens had opened, and between whiles the thunder and lightning disported themselves among the blotted-out hills. The two girls shrank together in the middle of the seat, while Gene lashed his horses to a run, in the hope of reaching shelter. The buckboard swayed, as Gene, with apparent recklessness, let the horses plunge along in the darkness down the hills and around the narrow curves of the stony road. Finally a little light ahead punctuated the blackness, and they arrived at Windy Flanders. The horses were driven into the shed, and Alison and June fled to a sheltered recess of the piazza, alternately laughing over and bemoaning their pitiable plight. Rough voices and shouts of laughter sounded from within, where Windy Flanders and some of his boon companions were in session together.

"There is one consolation," said Alison—"your mother will never imagine what a really impossible situation we are in."

"There ain't no sign of the rain lettin' up," remarked Lawless, splashing up to the porch in his sozzly boots. "I guess the best ye kin do is to put up hyar fer the night."

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"Never!" cried the two girls at once, and June seized Alison's hand in instinctive appeal.

"The horses is clean guv out," went on Lawless, imperturbably stroking his wet gray chin-whiskers. "They was never good roaders, and I reckon I couldn't get you home till mornin', nohow."

"Bring us something to drink, Gene. Hot lemonade or whiskey and soda?"

"I calc'late he hes the whiskey all right, miss," the man chuckled.

"And then we will go on to camp, whether or no."

Alison's dismissing hand was convincing. Lawless, after an argumentative change of balance from right foot to left, and a pull at his chin-whiskers, decided to simulate agreement. He went inside. From the increased mirth, Alison surmised that he too had sought consolation from Windy Flanders's hospitable decanters, when the door was flung open, and the broad-faced host himself stood in the doorway. His fat, red cheeks were fringed with yellow-gray whiskers, and his collarless shirt was stained with liquor. Alison and June caught a glimpse of a sawdust-covered floor and five or six burly lumbermen gathered about their glasses. The air was blue with smoke, through which the kerosene lamps burned like street gas in a fog.

"Come right in, young leddies," bawled Windy Flanders. "The boys'll give ye a roarin' good welcome, and we'll drink to ye'r health all raound."

The lumbermen in the background sheepishly echoed his 'aughter. One of them—already half-seas over—pressed between the boisterous host and the door-frame with a maudlin plea to the "leddies not

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to be backward." Gene unconcernedly steamed himself in front of the open fireplace.

Windy Flanders's respect for women was in exact proportions to the lateness of the hour and their escortage. When Loon Lake visitors in broad daylight drove up before his establishment with tooting of horns and flourish of whips, and gallant young fellows ready at the steps to assist fluttering creatures to alight, no one could be more obsequious than he, preferring the shade of his piazza, rocking-chairs, and ice-cold buttermilk, rubbing his broad, dimpled hands on his loose trousers with an overflow of deference. But two dripping damsels in the darkness, with a guide who dried himself leisurely in the tap-room, evoked altogether a different manner.

"Well, hain't ye got nothin' to say fer yourselves?" he continued. "We cain't keep this hyar door open all night fer ye. Come in and welcome to what we've got. Or ain't it good enough fer ye?"

"Thank you for your hospitality, Mr. Flanders." Alison stepped forward and eyed Windy Flanders with her clear, honest gaze. "We are on our way home to Colonel Hollister's camp. If you will kindly give me a little glass of whiskey for Miss Hollister, who is almost exhausted. No, we will not come in unless you have a room with a fire where we can be by ourselves."

Alison looked at him steadily, while June clung to her hand, half-crying.

"Lemme by," cried the maudlin lumberman, pressing forward. "In wish ye, my beau'shies, an' I'll show ye how warm yourshe'ves up."

In the stress of the storm no one heard the approaching wheels. June's cry of terror only awaken-

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ed pleasurable anticipation from the rough audience now bunched within the doorway.

When Enoch left the hall and joined his brothers down-stairs, it was with mingled feelings of humiliation and triumph. The domineering quality of his will was almost oppressive, yet it was joined to such personal magnetism that he had seldom suffered defeat. In a bad cause Enoch could have had the power of a Mephistopheles. To his mother and to those who loved him he seemed an archangel. He himself was unconscious of the amazing determination that compelled people and circumstances under his sway. It had never occurred to him that this absorbing devotion to one's ideals was not characteristic of all the world. He only knew that God's ways should be his way, and that his way he was strong enough to bring about. To have conquered, by God's help, Loiseau's wild crew of dancers into submissive listeners, though it gave him no giddy elation, filled his heart with the grave joy of victory. Then the joy was turned to bitterness by Sararose's rebellion. That he could touch the hearts of outsiders, and was helpless to mould to his hand his own little sister, seemed intolerable. He did not dream that the bitterness of thwarted will infused itself into his proud sorrow.

He flung himself into a chair at the end of the store. The look in his eyes was both sad and cruel.

"You boys go on home," he said to Ab and Azzy. "I shall wait here for Sararose till the dance is over."

They remonstrated with him, but in vain. Partly for Sararose, partly for Enoch's sake they hated to leave him to the long vigil, well imagining the dreariness of the ride home for the young girl, with her

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stern brother beside her, and the tension of his own feelings. They reminded him of the morrow's work, but he held that his duty to Sararose was paramount; so they left him. For half an hour he sat staring at the box of fancy biscuit on the counter, while the sing-song of the music and the slide of the dancers' feet were a dismal undertone to his thoughts. At such times it often seemed to him that his life was a failure. The mother, whom he had worshipped, had filled his mind with the noblest ideals. It had not seemed, either to her or to him, folly to hope for their attainment. With a completed education, and as minister of the gospel, Enoch Holme did not in his mind stop short of a great church and a world-wide influence. In whatever sphere of life he had been placed he had so far been master. At the lumber camps in the winter the wild men under him had looked up to him as a head. He had been master-wit, controlling their pleasure as naturally as he organized their labor. They had gathered to hear him preach a sermon—an event before unknown in those backwoods settlements.

In college he had easily led his class, holding the office of president, and gaining academic distinction both as student and orator. His rigid morality had repelled some few, but his genial overflow of rustic humor attracted more, while the force of his intellect compelled admiration from all. But to-night the thoughts of his past and future sickened him. His influence over the lives of those nearest him was not dominant. The mountain bickerings and feuds went on about Elk Mountain and Loon Lake. Drink and cards had each their quota of devotees. His own brothers abjured neither. His little con-

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gregation, as Loiseau had tauntingly declared, was largely composed of the women and children. The young girls who listened to him on Sundays still mingled with the ungodly and irreligious at their social gatherings. And his only sister — his beloved Sararose — would not subscribe to his own lofty tenets of altruism and purity.

The waltz music floated down through the cracks of the ceiling, languidly reiterating the voluptuous invitation, over and over again, with feverish emphasis.

"Thou, God, hast humbled me," prayed Enoch. "Oh, Christ, save her, save her!"

With this passionate prayer on his lips, he became aware of his sister's presence before him. She had slipped down-stairs for pins to repair a rent in her ruffles. Enoch's heart overflowed with tenderness for her. She was flushed and tired, holding the torn skirt with one hand, the other replacing a coil of the lustrous hair that had fallen on one shoulder.

"My darling," he exclaimed, catching her to his heart. "My own little sister, you are sorry, and you are coming home with me."

Sararose was flushed with Hollister's gallantries. How oblivious this great brother was to the hair and the eyes that Mr. Hollister had praised! How he crushed her in his arms, with no thought but to win her to his purpose, now by severity or now by endearment.

"No, I am not sorry," she answered, in a cold, remote little voice. "Let me go; you are mussing my lace."

Enoch drew back from her. The tears misted his

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blue eyes. The whole look of his face was infinitely sad. Sararose melted a little.

"You have been waiting for me?"

"I have been waiting for you."

The contrast struck her between the light and gayety up-stairs and the loneliness of the cold, dull store below.

"I am sorry, Enoch," she said, nestling up to him, "but please don't wait for me. Tyke will take me home."

"You are breaking my heart, little sister," said Enoch, solemnly. He saw that she was moved.

"Your heart is easily broken," returned she, her mouth full of pins now, as she caught together her ruffles.

He sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands. Sararose was afraid that he was praying. She put one thin, nervous hand on his forehead and smoothed his hair. Poor Enoch, how grim life must be for him!

"I will stay here all night with Zuba," she whispered. "Will you like that better?"

Enoch leaped from his chair, and before she knew what he was about he had flung his overcoat over her shoulders.

"You will come home with me," he said, fiercely, "and you will not go up-stairs again." He transfixed her with a look of steely determination. Sararose's will sprung out to meet his. Jerking herself free of his overcoat, she stamped on it.

"But I will," she cried, and was up the stairs and out of sight like a flash.

After this episode, and in such a mood, Enoch harnessed his horses and started on the long home-

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ward ride through the storm. When he reached Windy Flanders's the open door and the group on the threshold attracted his notice—Flanders, with the insolence of power on his purple face, the drunken lumberman pushing forward with a maudlin smile, and Alison MacDonald, with the repellent gesture of her hand, her damp, white serge clinging to her form like sculptured drapery. Then June's scream rang out. It was not a moment before Enoch had thrown the reins over the horses' necks and was within the gates and up the steps like an avenging deity.

"Brutes," he cried, and Flanders and his companions fell ignominiously backward into the room under the powerful stroke of his arm.

He stood there hatless, the red light falling on his noble forehead, his rough hair and beard curly with the dampness, and his clinched hands ready for an onset. But no one dared attack him, for Enoch Holme, aroused, was a lion, and even the drunken lumberman knew that his cause was problematical. Windy Flanders reflected that perhaps, after all, the intervention had saved him some unpleasant consequences. For, if the ladies were from the Hollister Camp, Colonel Hollister was a man to be reckoned with.

After Enoch learned from Alison of their difficulty, and where they were bound, he turned once more to Flanders.

"Build a fire in your kitchen," he commanded, "and quick about it, too!"

It was not many minutes before Enoch conducted the girls to the kitchen, where the logs began cheerily to blaze in the immense fireplace.

"So you are Enoch Holme," said June, frankly

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satisfying her curiosity by a look of admiration that the man found not wholly to his liking. The slight reserve of Alison's eyes preserved the homage of equality. "On Private View" is humiliating even to lions.

"I am Enoch Holme, Miss Hollister," he replied, so gravely that June was rebuked.

"You have been a family name with us ever since Dick visited the camp, last winter," she added, more humbly. "Hasn't he, Alison?" June found it necessary to strengthen herself by side appeal, always a symptom of shaky conversational footing.

Alison! Enoch thought of the memorandum in a compartment of his well-worn pocket-book. He looked at her again, and she knew the surmise that had come to him.

"Yes, I am A. MacDonald, Secretary," in calm answer to his look. They both laughed, and June looked astonishment. Undercurrents were not June's specialty.

"I beg your pardon," said Enoch, still smiling and glad at least that she did not know of his unpardonable liberty with the memorandum. What right has one to treasure in one's memory a casual detail in some one else's life? "After you are warm and dry, and as soon as you wish it," he said, "I am at your service to take you home."

"The conquering hero!" exclaimed June, after he had gone out. "But what was he begging pardon and both of you laughing about?" She toasted her feet comfortably on the fender, while Alison, white and trembling after the excitement, sipped her whiskey, leaning against the chimney-shelf.

"What should we have done?" said Alison. "He

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was a regular god from the machine. Now I wonder if he would understand that."

"He did drop from the clouds," sighed June. "Perhaps he will vanish as quickly when his work is done, like the fairies in Hans Andersen."

June and Alison laughed gently together. The affair had already begun to reassume its cheerful aspect, and, with the readiness of youth, they lent themselves to adventure.

The moon was out and placidly beaming as they started on the homeward drive. Enoch in front, silhouetted against the light, and June and Alison behind, wrapped up in a buffalo-robe, none too warm against the mountain air after the rain. June, resting against Alison's shoulder, was soon asleep, but the latter was too keenly alive to the novelty of the situation and the surpassing beauty of newly washed moonshine on glittering foliage and shadowlike etchings on the white, winding road to yield to the least inclination towards slumber. They dipped into a pool of darkness between high, overhanging banks and down the hill that leads to the rapids of the Elder River. The roaring of the water warned them of the approach to Lone Falls. The fury of the overcharged current, boiling between its banks, filled the air. The great swept heavens were glorious with light above the woolly white cataract. Enoch drew up on the bridge and sat silent. Alison wondered if he, too, had fallen under the spell of moonlight and many-toned sound. It seemed as if one sat at the heart of a great complex symphony, with tones and undertones thundering about one, and nothing but confusion and tumult out of it all. Then, as one listened, mere noise subsided, and the most exquisite harmony fell

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upon the senses, many-hued as the rainbow, cool and wonderful in timbre as no instrument can ever realize. The piano or harp can produce single notes with the musical tinkle of rain, but the waterfall and the river hold their secret unmolested.

Alison was motionless, for her arm was about June, and she feared to awaken her. Enoch, looking back, had deemed them both asleep. He gave himself over to his reverie. The excitement of the incident at Windy Flanders's, the glory of the night, the cool touch of mountain air had driven from him the pain of the earlier evening. Turning towards the falls, he bared his brow to the breeze. It seemed to Alison, watching, almost a gesture of reverence. The moon lighted his forehead. Then she heard his voice, low, sonorous: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voices; the floods lift up their waves."

There was silence again, and to Alison one note less in the liquid symphony. Again the chime of the voice, deeper than before.

"The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

He drove on. Up the long village street the gray, uninhabited houses hung like cobwebs. When Alison asked Enoch some trivial question about the village she did not know how she startled him out of deep thought. Alison's voice, like her hands, expressed a unique individuality. It woke him to the consciousness of a person among the buffalo-robcs. He turned towards her as he spoke, while the horses slowly climbed the steep road, deeply rutted by the storm. They were in an open wagon, and the moon shone clearly on Alison's oval features, obliterating

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the girlish piquancy of daylight and lending an other-worldliness to her dark eyes. She had folded the robe away from her and about June, so that, in her white serge skirt and close white sweater, she seemed moulded of unreality.

Enoch told her traditions of the mountain and one weird tale of Lone Falls, the deserted village. Thirty years ago it had been a prosperous settlement, the whizzing of the mill-wheels providing flour for the mining-camps. There were shops and houses built by miners or by those who supplied their wants, and a busy life coming and going in the streets. But when the iron-mines were closed the industry of Lone Falls succumbed, and its few hundred inhabitants scattered. The barren soil refused to give sustenance to farmers, and the untenanted houses grew grayer from year to year. Strange stories passed from mouth to mouth of a haunted house, set deeply within its grove of overgrown cedars, that pressed closely against the very windows. A huge lilac-bush hid the door-way, and the back garden was screened from the road by a jungle of brambles and bushes. Once a lumberman going through by night on horse-back had seen a candle-light wavering from window to window. A bevy of country girls, driving past to Spriggs's Corners at twilight, heard a child's voice wailing from the garden. They had hurried on with uncouth screams and voluble conjecture. A daring couple from the Loon Lake Hotel saw a shadowy face peering at them from a hole in the window-pane, and then a bony hand that drew the head backward by its long hair. They had torn away the vines from the unwilling gate, and forced an entrance through tall weeds to the shattered front steps. The men cut

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away the lilac branches and loudly knocked on the door. No response came but the dismal reverberation of an empty house. They had looked in at the window, seeing nothing but bare walls and the thick dust and cobwebs of long disuse, and so gone on their way unenlightened.

"The mystery was finally solved," finished Enoch, "when a traveller arrived at Elk Mountain with the story that, belated, the night before, he had slept at Lone Falls. Not knowing the village was a deserted one, he had knocked from door to door, till, coming to the haunted house, he heard the sound of a spade in the garden. He tore his way through the brambles and saw in the dim light a woman, her clothes in tatters, digging on a side hill. He got to his questions no response but inarticulate cries, but she gave him a straw bed in an out-house. In the morning he discovered the weirdness of the situation. The woman of the night before gave him a breakfast of boiled potatoes. An idiot boy in a woman's calico wrapper was her companion. The two occupied a large, filthy room in a wing at the back of the house, were lean to emaciation, and their clothing literally hung in shreds. Their hair was long and matted, and they gave no sign of ability to use human speech."

"How strange and horrible!" cried Alison; "and was his story investigated?"

"It was found to be true. The woman's husband, a miner, had left her with a promise, probably, to return or to send for her when he found work, and meanwhile the village folk drifted away. This woman moved down from her shanty near the mining-camp and took up the abandoned house. It was found she had raised potatoes and other vegetables

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in her garden from year to year, but how she provided for herself God only knows. Her idiot child grew up, and she, like him, lost all sense of human fellowship and intercourse."

"They were rescued and cared for?"

"They were cared for as well as might be, but it was difficult to bring back any but the dimmest intelligence to the woman's buried faculties. She and the boy died soon after."

Enoch omitted his own part in their rescue. He was the one who had sought them out and taken them at first to his own house, where John now lived. But, unwilling that Sararose, then a little girl of eight years, should suffer so uncanny a presence with her in the house, he had tried to find a refuge for them among the neighbors where there were women in the household. Failing in this, he had taken the poor, forsaken creatures to Lost Inn, his own peculiar lodge up in the woods, and had fitted them up comfortably out of his meagre resources. It had been in the summer season, when the log-driving was over, and he had found time for daily visits to care for their needs. He had hoped that with cleanliness, warmth, companionship, and good food, the woman's intelligence might be restored. No one, not even his brothers, who helped him at Lost Inn, knew the time and effort that Enoch had vainly spent on these pathetic tags of humanity.

"It almost seems more pitiful than weird," said Alison, when he had concluded, "the terrible isolation and barrenness that made such a life possible."

"Yet it is characteristic of our mountain people," said Enoch, "and only an extreme instance. There are few who lose the capacity for speech, but there

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are many who have capacity for feeling and for the speech that springs from nobler human fellowship."

"Sad, sad," Alison responded.

The sympathetic vagueness of her tone aroused Enoch to the fact that she was an outsider and a stranger. He had forgotten external relationship as he talked with her, only aware of the soul in her eyes and voice. Alison had the eyes and the voice that lead men to self-revelation. She did not have beauty, nor the fascination of brilliance, but she had had more lovers than if she were possessed of both. Love-making was the dreaded termination of many of her most satisfying friendships.

Now they were at the top of the range, with the long valley below them, Lake Miquewauga lying in moonlight like a silver shield, so still that one might almost hear

"The sighs of all the sleepers in the world."

"Here we are above the woods, and on the upland," said Enoch, "and I have been troubling you with the sadness of the valley. It is not right; you have enough that is unpleasant to remember of this night without my grewsome yarning."

"I shall also have something pleasant to remember," said Alison with directness, "and quite unusual."

She laughed girlishly, but Enoch was silent, not knowing how to understand the laughter.

"Mr. Holme," she went on, earnestly, divining his mind, "you do not know how you have interested me this night. Please do not regret that you have spoken of life so candidly."

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Her beautiful voice and the sweet look of her eyes, which he turned to meet, disarmed his last suspicion. The backwoods reticence and the fear of misunderstanding was characteristic of Enoch, as it was of all the mountain folk. Added to it, in Enoch, was a large, gentle pity for the shallow volubility that seemed to him the distinguishing trait of superior city people. But this girl he at once gave a place by herself. He wondered if it would be ever his good fortune to know well such a one. Could he ever reveal to her the secret of the pocket-book? What a listener she had been! All the virtues and intelligences namable may easily be attributed to a good listener.

"I do not regret it. I will not regret it," Enoch responded.

As they drove down the long incline towards the valley, Alison exclaimed over the loveliness of the unrolling scene. Her words were the simple outgushing of the joy of earth, and required no answer. Enoch recognized them as such, and thought, with an almost passionate poignancy, that the drive would soon be over, and that, in all probability, he should never lay eyes on this girl again.

"Above us, Miss MacDonald," he cried, pointing upward to the luminous, large vault of heaven.

Alison looked upward long and earnestly.

"The moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare,"

quoted she.

Enoch recognized it as a quotation, but did not know the source. On such a night it was trivial to

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think in any words but David's, the mountain minstrel of earth and God!

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained."

His solemn response was like reproof. Sounding so in his own ears in the quiet that followed, he hastened to redeem the situation. "That is my mood, Miss MacDonald; you see I am a serious man. But let me hear more of your poet. I do not know him."

"Really?" asked Alison. "I love the poets, but my friends will not let me quote them. They say it is sentimental."

"If I were your friend," said Enoch, "you would not be deprived. The poets give us the fine essence of philosophy, love, and religion."

"You are my friend from this time," said Alison, again with the directness that made her "different."

"Are you not, Mr. Holme?"

"I shall count it an honor. And now will you give me your poet?"

Alison leaned forward, reciting some simple lines, and the charm of Wordsworth was first revealed to Enoch Holme.

"And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things."

Alison had a fleeting thought, as one will even when one is most in earnest, of how Richard and June, all the merry materialistic camp at Miquewauga, would scoff at her if they could learn of this

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poetry-quoting episode with the Elk Mountain preacher, how it would pass down as a legend and a byword, teasingly to confront her, with ingenious decorative adjuncts, at many a familiar gathering.

“The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear—”

Alison, changing the position of June's head on her tired arm, thought, with a little humor, what a good story June could make of it if she should only be pretending sleep.

“You are tired,” cried Enoch, with quick sympathy. He took the light blanket from his knees. “Put this under your friend's head, against the back—yes, so, and you will not have to support her. There, that is better. The poem again, please.”

The calmness of his request satisfied Alison. He was at ease with her. She loved to put people at their ease.

“There is nothing I should enjoy better,” she answered. “You are sure it will not bore you?”

“Quite sure.”

“—and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.”

Enoch, looking at the speaker, and listening with a strange new delight to her rainbow voice, could only think that she perfectly portrayed herself. They had turned into the rough camp-road some time ago, the horses picking their way carefully in the darkness.

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"Now, here we are," said Enoch, regretfully, as the lights from various windows glimmered through the trees. "Here we are."

"At last," cried Alison, only thinking of the long, anxious watch that had doubtless been kept for them.

At last! The little exclamation recalled Enoch to the briefness of their relationship. He pulled the horses up hard, with the same sort of pull at his heart.

"June, dear, here we are."

"Already?" cried June, sleepily.

The doors were opened, and people ran out, and servants came, and there was much embracing and kissing, explaining and interrupting, as Enoch drove away through the silent woods.

The poem's end said itself over in his mind—

"The memory of what has been,
And never more will be."

Weakling, why will not be? It shall be. Fool, why should it be? What do you care for her, or she for you?

CHAPTER VII

At the Elk Mountain Church

THE dance at Spriggs's had been provocative of a quarrel. It started over conflicting orders to the musicians from Hartle and Loiseau. Hartle ordered a polka, and Loiseau a waltz. From this small beginning the fracas had grown to serious proportions, and had engaged upon one side or the other most of the men in the hall. It had finally aroused to consciousness a feud, long dormant, between the Loiseaus and the Newcomes, in which during the next few days the whole mountain-side became concerned, and ranged themselves strictly along party lines. Hollister and John Holme departed earlier, when the interruption first waxed tedious, after which Sararose visibly languished. Then Tyke took her away, and bestowed her safely below in charge of Zuba Spriggs and her mother. She was half sorry, after all, that she had gone to the dance, sorry that she had repelled Enoch so coldly, and, above all, she dreaded his silent severity, the usual aftermath of these estrangements.

When she saw him at supper the next evening she was prepared for the stern abstraction of manner that marked his displeasure. Enoch had usually no set design of punishment for Sararose, but what natural

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displeasure he felt at wrong-doing he was willing should be manifest to wrong-doers. It was a dynamic force of no mean power. But, contrary to her expectations, she found him overflowing with gentleness.

He rallied her on her blushes when Azzy spoke of Tyke, praised her soda-biscuit with boyish enthusiasm, told some amusing stories of the lumber-camp, mimicking the French-Canadian *patois* of one of his men, and after supper was over, insisted on helping her with the dishes. Enoch's gaiety was as dominating as his gloom. He could fill the whole house with sunshine or with darkness, as he pleased. He was governed by mood more than most people. But he differed from most people in believing that mood was conscience. If the mood of indulgence was on him, indulgence was the dictate of conscience, and *vice-versa*. To-night some of the brightness of the drive with Alison lingered with him. He had a vague feeling of happiness in store for him, of great possibilities of good. His heart was warm towards humanity. This was before the latent feud had sprung up, before he had got the rumor of the evening's disturbance.

The leaves of the tables were folded down, and the green-shaded lamp put in the centre of the red cotton cover. Azzy sat quiet, his curly head bent over some mechanical drawings. He was planning some device to improve the circular saw in use at Hollister's mills. Ab, on the sofa, read his newspaper, *The Country Gentleman*. Daddy, in his arm-chair, seemed absorbed in thought, carefully fitting the tips of his fingers together, and making other accurate digital arrangements. Enoch drew Sararose

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upon his knees. She was such a child, and he must be very tender with her. He wondered if she loved him as much as he loved her. If she would only love him deeply, she would obey him and do his will. Then he would make her happy and save her from folly and wrong-doing.

"You are tired, tired," he said. "Brother is sorry that his little sister must work. When Prince Charming goes by, he will take you away in his gold chariot and you shall do nothing all day."

He caressed her little hand, holding it in his and looking at it as if it were a precious thing. Sararose adapted herself gracefully to caresses. The Holmes were not awkward in demonstration of affection as were the families about them. There must have been a Romance strain somewhere in their blood.

Sararose laughed brightly. "But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam," she finished; "and what will you do, Enoch, when I have ridden away with Prince Charming?"

"Cut timber for your firewood."

"Oh no, you will find a Princess Charming, and I shall raise strawberries for her breakfast."

Both of them laughed. Sararose conjured up a Prince Charming with warm brown eyes and a dent in the middle of his chin. Enoch's Princess Charming had an oval, creamy face and a voice of music.

"Sing me a little song, Sararose, and then I will read to you while you darn stockings."

"A hymn or 'Annie Laurie'?"

"Which would you rather, dear?"

"'Annie Laurie,' or any song you please. I hate hymns."

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Sararose was emboldened by his playful mood.

"A song, then afterwards, for my sake, 'Behold a Stranger at the Door.'"

Sararose turned over the leaves of the fat song-book at the old yellow-keyed piano which had been her mother's. "The Suwanee River," "The Harp that Once," "Lily Dale," "Annie Laurie" -- she passed them all by. She played a few bars of "Kathleen Mavourneen," but it was always a little high for her voice; then "A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Bowl," but she remembered in time that Enoch did not like convivial songs. He waited patiently, a slight frown settling on his forehead, for this dallying with inclination was difficult to put up with. "Robin Adair" was finally her choice. Enoch gave himself over to tranquil enjoyment of the plaintive song and Sararose's sympathetic voice.

"The words, the words," he reminded her. He would not have appreciated the operative style of musical tones without meaning.

Then, but with much less fervor, Sararose sang through the six stanzas of Enoch's hymn. Daddy drew his chair up by Azzy to inspect his drawing.

"E F represents my diameter, and here A B is the wheel."

"I see." Daddy's pleased eyes took in the diagram. "How big a saw are you reckoning on?"

"About seventy. I've tried to figure out something larger, but of course the rigidity diminishes with the diameter."

"And with the dimensions of the work," Daddy added, his old familiarity with the saw-mill leaving him tags of knowledge which had to be supplemented by Azzy's careful explanation, for there had been

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great improvements in wood-working machinery since Daddy's day.

Azzy's engineering instincts and technical skill, unaided as they were by theory, had already taught him the crudeness of the circular saw. He would have appreciated the Russian's famous comment of "Horrible!" on a Centennial exhibit. They were deep in a project of lateral support for saw-plates, and the talk was all of curve and tension and alignment when Ab, buried in his *Country Gentleman*, emerged with a "Listen to this!"

Ab's slow, dry humor found unfailing inspiration in the common things of life. Unconscious humor was his special delight.

"' Fireside Chats for Boys and Girls,' " he read aloud. "' Dear Mr. Editor,—My father takes your paper and likes it, but mother likes it better than father. I milk two cows and tend to the milk. Our house is on a very nice little hill.' "

Ab did not take the trouble to find out if he had listeners, which, considering circumstances, was well for his peace of mind. He continued:

"' My, but it takes a good deal of work to keep it clean. I agree with Flossy about dish-washing. Me and sister are keeping house for pa. I am glad to see spring coming. The little birds seem glad, as they are singing so sweet this morning. Mary Moon.' "

Ab laughed noiselessly to himself and turned a page. Then looking up, he saw Sararose shutting the piano softly and putting the hymn-book away. He gave her a slow, appreciative wink, that from Ab had no particular meaning, except as a token of mutual understanding.

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"Now for a read from *Dombey and Son*," said Enoch, as Sararose sat down to her darning-basket.

This to Daddy, who detested loud reading, was a signal for bed. He was a chatty old man, and Enoch was intolerant of interruption. Sararose kissed him good-night, and Enoch, with his candle, accompanied him up-stairs. Daddy would have liked to sit longer in the lamplight and cheer, studying Azzy's diagrams or gossiping with Sararose over her work-basket. But Enoch's sonorous monotone and the silence of his circle of listeners! Bed was preferable far. They had been reading for a half-hour or so, when a knock came at the front door, and John Holme entered.

"Wife not well," he said. "Been to Saranac for medicine. How are you, Sararose, after the dance? Hot old time, wasn't it?"

"What, don't you know of the row?" he asked Enoch, after more questions and answers had been exchanged. "The whole mountain's up in arms under the banners of Loiseau and Newcome."

Enoch glanced sternly at Sararose as if she were somehow responsible, and she dropped her eyes guiltily.

"Don't look at her!" cried John, bluntly. "She's not party to the fight. It started long before she was born, with old Si Newcome's cow, strayed into Loiseau's herd. And this evening it's come to blows between two of them."

"Not Tyke?" asked Sararose.

"No, his cousin Pete and young Si Newcome, at Eddie's. They had to be torn apart. Mark my word, boys, there'll be more trouble than blows out o' that polka music at Spriggs's Corners."

Enoch paced up and down the floor, his brow knit.

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Sararose's trembling fingers could scarcely direct the needle back and forth through her work. Affairs of national importance are felt most keenly by the individual when they result in some petty personal inconvenience. Sararose foresaw from this news personal consequences that would be unpleasant. She asked John how the baby was.

"Baby well," he replied, "fat as butter and bright as a button. Have her to-morrow if you want her. I'll bring her to church with me and relieve Delia."

John's two-year-old baby was a great pet at Enoch's, and she would go to Enoch sooner than she would to her own father. But Enoch did not mind about her now, pacing up and down the sitting-room, and revolving in his mind his own responsibility in regard to the feud newly arisen. Enoch would have found life easier if he had not borne so heavily responsibility for other people's sins.

"Saw you dancing with young Hollister," John continued, in a lower tone, sitting down by Sararose and playing with her ball of wool. "Nice young chap. Good-natured to beat the band."

"Aren't you down at the camp any more?" asked Sararose, trying to make her voice indifferent, but longing to hear more about Richard Hollister.

"Not for a couple of weeks. Not much doin' there now. Delia wants me at home. I'm steady old married man, Sararose. Well, I must be going. Good-bye!"

After all the family were in bed, Enoch went out to get the freedom of the night air and the solitude of the stars. He walked bareheaded up and down the Saranac road, under the kindly heaven, seeking

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the peace of God. His sermon for the next day came to him then.

The open windows of the little Elk Mountain church, set above the village on its lonely hill, framed the exquisitely lovely blue of distant ranges. About the white-porticoed doorway the pines stood dark. Inside, the young women of the choir sang. They pursued the tune with unflagging vigor, up hill and down dale, to the bitter end. When they had finished and had settled themselves back in their seats, primly conscious of flower-trimmed hats and cashmere dresses, Enoch began his sermon, looking out over his congregation with sad, fearless eyes. The faces of his people were also sad, with the dull indifference of imprisoned animals.

When Enoch announced his text, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," there was a slight stir in the congregation. One of his deacons was a Loiseau, the other a Newcome. Some of the old men grasped the knobs of their canes between their knees with added tension, or took a pinch of snuff, glowering from under shaggy, white eyebrows. Most of the old men wore a yellow-white fringe of whiskers about their copper-red, stubbly faces. The black-clad, narrow backs of the women grew more rigid as they looked immovably ahead of them. In the front row sat Enoch's brothers and Sararose with Baby Jessie. The baby's fluffy head shone like a dandelion above her white frock. As Enoch preached on brotherly love the feeling that moved him was apostolic. Baby Holme missed her mother and was disturbed by the unusual surroundings. She decided to climb down from the seat and see what there was to play with

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on the floor. She turned herself about in preparation for the downward slide. A little boy behind smiled at her furtively. She threw him a kiss and laughed back, when suddenly, without warning, her father's strong hands replaced her on the seat beside him. After a grieved moment of pouting, she decided to cry. Why did every one sit so quiet, and why did uncle, far away above her, talk so very loud? She had better cry, and then some one would come and play with her. Sararose tried to hush the little resonant voice, but all in vain. Then a woman from behind leaned over and administered, in a terrific whisper, meant to be soothing:

"Ain't ye ashamed, baby? Be a good little gell, now."

Baby Jessie burst into tears of fright, puzzled beyond comprehension. To the surprise of the congregation, Enoch Holme stepped from the pulpit and took the little morsel tenderly into his arms. Jessie cooed with delight. A ride on uncle's shoulder was a familiar pastime. Resuming his place above the people, he went on with his discourse, baby nestling against his breast. Undoubtedly, Enoch Holme was peculiar. This incident alone would occasion more discussion than a dozen affrays at Windy Flanders's. It is a serious thing to flout the conventions of a country neighborhood.

The party from Colonel Hollister's camp, who entered church somewhat late, were greeted by this sight: a sunburned man, roughly clad, with a baby on his arm, preaching on brotherly love. They had been anxious for a new diversion, and had dragooned Alison into making one of their number. They scattered themselves about among the empty pews, Ali-

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son taking a seat by herself near the front. She was genuinely ashamed of their late arrival, and did not share the camp feeling that a country church-service was a spectacular affair. Enoch saw Alison and knew her. With just a slight break in his voice, the sermon went on. He could feel the dark eyes upraised to his, and as he met them from time to time, he drank strength from their earnestness.

"The spirit of war is the spirit of hate," he said, "and the spirit of hate is the spirit of the devil."

His ringing denunciations were strongly contrasted with the fatherly bend of his arm about the sleeping babe. He laid her in his own large upholstered chair, softer than the hard pews of the church.

"There are those who call themselves followers of the Lamb, and who will go out from this church this morning with war in their hearts against those who have in no wise offended them. And the command of the Lord is, 'Be ye at peace one with another.'"

Enoch inveighed more bitterly against the remote ramifications of the feud than against those whose high temper involved them in the original quarrel. It was these remote ramifications that perpetuated ill feeling and poisoned a community. His words caused an exchange of glances in the audience. On this point, at least, they were solid: such open allusions to local matters were more than unbecoming. They were irreverent. Alison, unusually susceptible to undercurrents, felt the tension of the atmosphere, and conjectured the situation.

"A mingling of gentleness and passion," she said to herself, "with the added strain of courage. Luther, Savonarola, Lincoln, were of the same stuff as he."

She was not given to sudden admirations. She had

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intellectual poise and the calmness of a nature spiritually rich. The sermon came to a close amid a thunder-breeding quiet.

"The collection will now be taken," said Enoch.

Si Newcome and old Loiseau glared by turns at each other and at the minister. The congregation waited. The situation was a pleasing one to both sides in the feud. The minister's mortification was justly a boomerang. The summer folks rustled a little among themselves at this inexplicable delay. Alison determined to step into the breach. She glanced across the aisle to Dick Hollister, and, catching his eye, rose from her seat, with a little motion of her hand towards the collection plates. He understood. Together they left their seats and made the usual circuit of the aisles, gravely, between faces that seethed with emotion, of resentful mountaineers and interested city people. The girls of the choir, forgetting Enoch's urgent wishes, whispered among themselves.

"Ain't they an elegant pair? Look at his boots and the way he parts his hair in the middle! Her dress ain't much to speak of, is it? Jest white muslin and the black velvet round her waist. But she's got an air to her, 'ain't she? Look how nice he opens the door of the pew for her."

If the repressed excitement of the moment could have burst forth into ejaculation and comment, what a conversational explosion there would have been in that little church. The service proceeded; the choir hunted down and slaughtered another tune. The benediction was pronounced, and the congregation dispersed. A buzz of talk arose from the sheds where the men unhitched their horses, while the

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women stood and waited. Alison and Enoch were the last to leave the church, and they walked out together, talking.

"We were not half grateful for your rescue of us the other night."

"It was nothing. I was going your way, in any case."

Alison's "At last," still rankling in Enoch's heart, bade him contain himself.

"Alison, can't we induce Mr. Holme to come down to the camp and try pot-luck with us at dinner?" said Mrs. Hollister.

She was a red-faced, gracious lady, who loved to patronize struggling clergymen and shop-girls.

"Yes, Mr. Holme, I wish you would do so," urged Alison, in her rich voice.

"I'm obliged to you," Enoch answered, "but we have Sunday-school at two o'clock, and I must have time before it for study and prayer."

Dick Hollister cast an amused look at Alison, which she did not answer.

"Quite right," Mrs. Hollister said, encouragingly. "It's perfectly proper for you young ministers to pray a great deal. It makes you more spiritual-minded. And what a beautiful parish you have. You are to be congratulated, Mr. Holme, upon this lovely retreat."

She bent down from the back seat and gave Enoch a plump, warm hand-shake; then, "Drive on, Dick."

The camp wagon rattled off. The minister, pursuing his way on foot, smiled to himself at the thought of his "retreat," in which he had been born and brought up. In the midst of the smile he heard a voice calling him. The Hollisters had stopped, and

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Mrs. Hollister was waving a regal summons to him.

"We must ask the young man for tea on Tuesday. It will be an opportunity for him to meet with some truly cultured people. Don't you think so, Alison?"

Mrs. Hollister had the habit of referring to Miss MacDonald, because she approved of her college training and womanly reasonableness. She herself subscribed to parlor-lectures on Egyptology and French Symbolism, and was an ardent disciple of a certain majestic Swâmi from the Parliament of Religions.

"Mr. Holme," she said, leaning over the back seat and addressing the young man as he strode forward, "we are going to insist on your coming down to the camp the day after to-morrow and taking an informal cup of tea with us."

Mrs. Hollister liked to emphasize the simplicity of her ways to those whose limited means would incline them to judge otherwise. She was never so happy as when she ate pâtés-de-foie-gras with a liveried butler behind her, and talked with a spare country minister or an intellectual-browed teacher on "plain living and high thinking."

"I shall be glad to do that, Mrs. Hollister," replied Enoch.

"About four o'clock, Mr. Holme. Good-bye!"

Dick, on the front seat beside Alison, gave her a sympathetic pressure of the hand. He delighted in the humorsomeness of his mother's protégés.

"We shall look for you," said Alison to Enoch, as they drove off.

CHAPTER VIII

Camp Bohemia

CAMP HOLLISTER had been rechristened Camp Bohemia by some of the younger generation who peopled it that summer. It consisted of a group of houses on the shore of the lake and hidden from each other by trees. Colonel Hollister's father, who had controlled the lumber interests of that section, had built the first house many years before. It had not been a "camp" then, although he did not import into it Austrian china and Chippendale chairs, as had the Hollisters of to-day. However, the name of "camp" was now justified by white-birch-bark panelling, cedar beams, a spinning-wheel, blue-jeans hangings, and an abundance of reed chairs and balsam pillows on the wide piazza, all of which evidences of rusticity did not exist in Grandfather Hollister's time. The camp had been long enough established to boast of a respectable *entourage* of lawn above rotted tree-roots and some pines of noble girth, separated from the dwarfing proximity of their forest rivals.

"Grandfather Hollister would certainly not recognize us to-day," said Mrs. Hollister on the piazza, cutting the pages of *The Psychic World*.

Some people from the next house, a Hollister

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brother's, were stringing past on the lawn, bizarrely accoutred for the mid-day swim.

"Literally or socially?" asked Alison, rising to join the party on the lawn.

"Both, my dear."

Edward Hollister, Junior, had married an artist, and they had always a raft of unconventional people about them. They were off now for "the co-educational swim," as Alison called it.

"Our floating population is fifty souls," said Dick Hollister, turning over lazily on his back in the water and pretending to count the swimmers.

"Then how do I come in?" asked Ysobel Ruddle, who claimed to be a materialist and a disbeliever in "souls."

"On the side, of course, Ysobel."

Mrs. Ruddle had just learned the sidewise swim, and was practising it, her splendid arms and neck dazzlingly white against her black silk bathing-suit, which glistened like wet sealskin. Richard swam briskly out into the lake, meeting Rathbun, the poet, pipe in his mouth, as was his habit, with June Hollister in tow, hand on his shoulder. He was showing her how to be rescued.

"I say, Rathbun!" Richard called out. "I draw the line. Steam-tugs are not allowed in this lake."

They were called into shore by Lindsay Nixon, a "painter person," as he called himself, who stood on a log and waved his tam at them.

"In, in, ye amphibians," he shouted. "We are planning a function for to-morrow."

"What have I to do with functions, or functions with I?" asked Mrs. Ruddle, sunning herself auda-

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ciously on a log, while the others scattered to their bathing-houses.

"You are still in mourning, Ysobel?" Nixon asked, mischievously.

Mrs. Ruddle had lately been separated from her husband, and her frank joy was a matter of comment, even among her friends. She had a fresh face like a boy's, with hair pushed back from a transparent forehead, and a ready laugh of childlike innocence. Her over-exuberant figure, deep-bosomed and broad-hipped, with limbs heavy for her medium weight, were out of keeping with the charming boyishness of her look and laugh.

"Not in mourning, but I've nothing to wear, Nixie."

"Then wear it," drawled Nixon. "It's the most becoming thing you have."

She threw a pebble at him and vanished into a bathing-house, her hair tumbling down her back.

"It's going to be a Brittany tea," Nixon explained later, as they strolled back to luncheon. "I have some delightful coifs with me, and if there aren't enough, others are easily made. What I have with me may serve as models."

"You'll be head coiffeur, I presume," said Alison, smiling.

"I cut if you finish, Alison."

Richard remonstrated.

"They're finished if Alison gets at them, Nixon."

Her aversion to needle-work was well known.

"Wide white collars, flaring head-dress, short black skirts; quite *chic*, eh, Rathbun?"

"What do the men wear?" asked Alison.

"If we cut down those Manila shade-hats you girls

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have been sporting, we shall do admirably, thank you."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the girls.

"We shall wear velvet streamers around them and keep them on our heads while we pass the tea," Nixon continued, calmly.

He was a tall, pale fellow, with a smooth, narrow face and dust-colored hair, parted in the middle, and overlong for the fashion.

"Tea!" exclaimed one of the men. "We should have cider."

"And sardines."

"And bagpipes."

"And babas."

"And the gavotte," added one and another of the Bohemians who had been together in Paris winters, and done Volendam, Pont-Aven, and the usual artists' preserves during several summers together.

"And a Concarneau fisherman drunk," cried Ysobel, showing all her pretty teeth in an innocent laugh as they passed in front of Colonel Hollister's piazza. They separated in a whirl of merriment.

The camp was quiet for a few hours while the ladies busily improvised Breton-peasant costumes. Alison and Richard, in a cosey nook of their own, the out-door studio, put their heads together over a bridegroom's costume. There was a gorgeous vest of chamois skin with black velvet applied in Brittany patterns. Richard offered to read aloud, and went to the house in search of literature.

He returned with a crestfallen expression and Lockhart's *Spanish Ballads*.

"Ysobel and Kitty have walked off with every-

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thing naughty, June has swooped up everything new. There was nothing left but this."

" 'Ruy Cid, my Campeador,' " said Alison, turning the pages. "Dick, I wish we had lived then, and you had been Rodrigo."

"And you Ximena!"

"And how gallantly you would have fought the Saracens, and all the people hailed you, my Cid."

"And you waited for me in lace and flowers at your latticed window."

"Dear me, it would have been dull waiting," sighed Alison.

"I rather think it is jollier this way," exclaimed Richard, throwing himself on the rustic floor by Alison's feet and smiling at her as her busy needle flew in and out.

"Please stand up a minute. I want to try this on."

"Stop laughing at me," said Richard, aggrieved.

"You are too deliciously funny in that yellow waistcoat over your outing flannels, my Cid!"

Nevertheless, Richard took an unfair advantage of Alison's proximity as she fitted the seams, an advantage which she did not fail to rebuke. They were plighted in marriage, but the coquetry of refusal had still its charms.

"Read one of the ballads."

"You are Spanish ballad enough for me," said Richard, lazily, bestowing the cushions comfortably beneath him on the floor.

The summer studio had been put up by Ned Hollister, the artist. It was a delightful little structure on an out-of-the-way knoll, built of birch-boles, with rough, open windows through which the vines clam-

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bered in and a young pine-tree thrust its plumes. Alison wore a corn-colored gown of some fluttery stuff, and she had thrown a black scarf about her head. The cream of her skin and the black of her grape-vine hair were set off with distinction. Richard preferred this picture between the clematis vines to Lockhart.

"Why do you wear that scarf?" he asked, indolently.

"Spiders," answered Alison, briefly, planning a complicated design.

"Now don't tell me it's spiders," smiled Richard, so happy in his admiration that he could not refrain from carping. "You know perfectly well it's the most becoming thing in the world."

"Read to me," answered Alison, irrelevantly.

"Throat's hoarse."

"Now don't tell me it's hoarseness," Alison laughed. "You know perfectly well you're the laziest thing in the world."

Richard plunged defiantly into a ballad:

"Since for kissing thee, Minguillo,
Mother scolds me all the day,
Let me have it quickly, darling,
Give me back my kiss, I pray."

"I say, that's not half bad," exclaimed young Hollister.

"If we have done aught amiss,
Let's undo it while we may,
Quickly give me back the kiss,
That she may have naught to say."

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"Ah, but you're not Minguillo, and you've made me lose my needle," rippled Alison, reprovingly.

"Do—she keeps so great a pother,
Chides so sharply, looks so grave;
Do, my love, to please my mother,
Give me back the kiss I gave.

"Out upon you, false Minguillo!
One you give but two you take;
Give me back the two, my darling,
Give them for my mother's sake!"

They heard footsteps outside among the bushes.

"What are you two conspiring?" exclaimed Mrs. Ned, appearing with her easel at the rustic door.

"Something in your line," said Richard, gravely;
"illustrating Spanish ballads."

CHAPTER IX

A Cup of Tea

ALISON was deputed to bake the crêpes, which were relied upon to give the final touch of reality.

"They must be yellow and worm-eaten-looking," Nixie instructed her as she beat up the batter in the kitchen, "like woollen lace, you know."

"Delightful," laughed Alison, "and how large?"

He indicated vaguely with his hands.

"About like the moon, the rising moon, for size, and they must taste like rancid leather."

"You should really bring out a cook-book, Nixie; your directions are so explicit."

The cook pulled his tins of habas from the oven, and the artist stood over him to see that the rum absorbed was sufficient in quantity.

"Enough?" queried Alison, pouring on the round soapstone griddle the foamy batter. It spluttered and heaved up in satisfactory bubbles.

"More, more. There!" Nixon tipped the bowl backward as the batter filled the circumference of the griddle and began to cake at the edges.

"But I'm afraid it's going to be too good, too good to be true," he declared, breaking off a flake that crimped over the side of the griddle.

"That's the first compliment you've paid me."

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Alison, with white sleeves turned back from her round arms and her clear pallor tinged with rose from the heat of the stove, was the picture of domesticity.

"I didn't mean it for a compliment, I assure you, Miss MacDonald," he returned, gravely.

Nixie, who was sincere and simple, had also the vice of his virtue and prided himself on his inaptness at pretty phrases. He looked at Alison boldly, as she pried up the cake to see if it were browning.

"I declare, you would do for a magazine advertisement of somebody's baking-powder," he told her.

"If I were in an illustration I shouldn't have such trouble in turning this cake. Put your knife under the opposite side. Yes, one, two, three!"

He whistled as the great cake flapped incoherently over. "It's as ticklish as the last line of a sonnet."

"Isn't one *crêpe* enough?"

Alison sat down in mock despair, her black hair crinklier than usual with the heat of the kitchen.

"I will bake the next one, Miss MacDonald, while you go and dress."

"Mind you don't touch the *babas*."

She shook her finger at him as she left the kitchen.

"You young people are very mysterious about this afternoon's entertainment," said Mrs. Hollister to Alison.

They stood in the great square hall before the glass of the chimney shelf. Richard was pinning together for Alison the flaring loops that curve outward in the Concarneau coif. He was very deft with his fingers.

"It's only a peasant affair, mother."

"There's something more afoot," said Mrs. Hollister, comfortably rocking herself in her favorite

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chair. She knew that the younger generation were planning a surprise, and she loved to fall in with their mood. She was one of those agreeable persons who take pains to guess generously high when one boasts of a bargain.

"I only hope that it isn't anything too outrageous. We mustn't forget that our young preacher is to be with us this afternoon. One never knows what to expect when Ysobel Ruddle has her finger in the pie."

Richard laughed appreciatively. One was apt to laugh at Ysobel, and with her, too, though one might regret it afterwards.

"I know," assented Alison. "I always catch my breath for fear she goes over the edge."

"That's the fun of her," cried Richard, laughing again.

"You look so absurdly pious," said Alison, putting her hands on Richard's shoulders and smiling up at him with proprietary affection. "Like an overgrown Sunday-school boy, Dick."

"Stop laughing at me," he replied, tenderly. "You little—Madonna."

He kissed her cheek as she leaned on his shoulder a moment.

There were tables set under the trees and on the piazza, and the older people from the four houses were gathered about them when Enoch Holme, in his loose black clothes and straw hat, came striding down the camp road. Notwithstanding exterior rusticity, there was no rustic self-consciousness in his manner, and the sense of power he carried made him a commanding presence even among cosmopolites. Colonel Hollister, a thin, clerical-looking man, with small,

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shrewd eyes, iron-gray, mutton-chop whiskers, and a firm, benevolent mouth, knew him and welcomed him. Mrs. Hollister added her exuberant hospitality. He was introduced to Edward Hollister, a brother. He was a portly man, with silvered hair, oblong, brown eyes, with heavy circles under them, a deeply lined face, and lips that curved downward like a half-ellipse.

"The young folks will soon be here," said Mrs. Hollister. "They are giving us a little spectacle to-day, Mr. Holme — Breton costumes and so forth, French peasants, you know. Some of your painter people set them off, Edward."

Edward smiled enigmatically. He was a phlegmatic man, with a reputation for wisdom, which he maintained by much silence and an interrupted, oracular utterance.

"How large a Sunday-school have you, Mr. Holme?" Mrs. Hollister chirruped. "Twenty-seven? That's a nice little number. You visit them in their homes, of course, and know the families. That's wise. I always tell my young friends who choose the ministry that they must get hold of these people through the children. It's more and more recognized, Mr. Holme, by our educators that the child is the important factor in progress. You have not read Froebel? Mary, dear, bring auntie the red book on her dressing-table. I initiated the Reverend John Willis Harold to the study of Froebel, and he says he has found it of immense advantage. You read German, Mr. Holme?"

It was generally known that Mrs. Hollister's questions had not the commonplace purpose of eliciting

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answers. She continued with a fluent fusillade of mingled autobiography and advice.

"You prepare your sermons in writing, do you not? I think it is much better to do so, especially for a young preacher. A very brilliant man may afford to improvise. How are you off for books? Is your library well stocked? If you are in town during the winter and will give me the pleasure of a call, I should like to let you have some excellent works, sermons and commentaries. I have always a supply on my shelves."

A sound of distant bagpipes came from among the trees. A string of Breton peasants danced into view, black and white, gay-aproned, orange-vested, twirling hand in hand through the figures of the "badoise." Their leader was a figure in a boy's blue sailor suit. The jacket and trousers, that should have been loose, were moulded to bountiful outlines. A red-lined cape, half concealing the shoulders and bust, swayed in a maudlin fashion with the reckless motion of the wearer.

"Ysobel Ruddle, as I am alive," whispered Mrs. Hollister to Edward, "and in your Willie's clothes."

The brothers adjusted their spectacles, too much interested to respond. Mrs. Hollister put up a horrified lorgnette. Ysobel led them in and out of the quaint Breton dance with grace and vivacity. Her glossy brown hair was pushed back under her large hat and fell about her ears in peasant locks.

"What a versatile creature she is," exclaimed Edward Hollister, admiring her despite himself. "I believe she's an adept at every national dance, and there's not a language she hasn't a smattering of."

"Have you seen her do the Hawaiian 'hula' "

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dance?" asked one of the ladies, also in a low voice, for no one was quite sure how openly this escapade would be recognized.

"Yes, and the 'Sevillaña,'" added another.

"What a beautiful boy," Enoch was saying to Mrs. Hollister. A puzzling silence followed.

"Now!" cried Ysobel, in her clear contralto, breaking away from the line, which dispersed in groups under the trees. She looked at Richard mandatorily. He started in with a sailor's hornpipe on his banjo. Ysobel fell into the steps with abandon, singing some strange guttural melody.

"Old Breton!" exclaimed Rathbun to June Hollister as they stood watching her.

She was beginning to roll and reel with unnecessary faithfulness to the type and delightedly aware of growing disapproval on the faces of some of the older people. Enoch perceived an air of restraint about the comments on this boy's performance and was mystified.

"For the love of decency, don't let him know it's a woman," whispered Mrs. Hollister to Alison, who stood behind her chair. Alison motioned to Richard to stop playing.

"You must be tired," she cried, approaching Ysobel as the banjo ceased and putting her hand on Ysobel's arm. Ysobel consented to Alison's tacit suggestion, and the two started for the house together.

"Clever little boy," cried Mrs. Ned, as Ysobel passed her.

Ysobel paused as she went by the group of which Enoch was a member. She swept her hat from her head with a rollicking gesture, and her long hair fell about her shoulders and half over her face as she

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bowed low. She presented her hat mockingly, begging:

"*Pourboire, messieurs, pourboire,*" and then ran up the piazza steps like a naughty child from punishment.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Edward, Senior.

Mrs. Hollister as a reactant plunged into a discussion of Buddhism with Enoch Holme. Servants came out with tea-trays, and peasant folk began to pass crêpes and babas.

"Babas," said a voice on one side of Mrs. Hollister.

"Crêpes," on the other.

A girl had the buckwheat cakes rolled up, peasant fashion, in her purple apron. She drew one out and offered to tear a section for Mr. Holme. It pulled apart like thick brown paper.

"So this is your work, Nixie," remarked Mrs. Edward Hollister, nibbling at a tough edge.

"I, too, have not been idle," he returned. Then every one laughed.

"I can't say I like it," Edward Hollister, Senior, replied to some one who had brought him the rum-soaked sponge cake.

"But you like the spirit in which it's brought, eh, Mr. Hollister?" said a stout lady.

Every one laughed again. Enoch, following the desultory conversation about him, felt less at home than if he had been among Fiji Islanders. A big punch-bowl had been set on the broad, flat stump which generally served as a tea-table. They were dipping something red from it. Near by on a table was the lemonade bowl. June Hollister stood between, a ladle in each hand.

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"Do have some civilized tea and biscuit, Mr. Holme," said Alison. "Don't attempt these heathen devices." Some one had given him a plate of babas, which he would not touch on account of its spirituous complement.

"Why do you pass me by?" said Richard, plaintively, as Ysobel sailed along, rehabilitated in gauzy blue, "cut low for comfort, not for the mountains," she averred.

Richard was the centre of a group of animated girls.

"How many satellites does your Dickship require?"

"Let 'em all come."

In a pause of conversation, Enoch heard this answer and the ripple of appreciation that greeted it. He would have liked to relax in the midst of so much relaxation, but for the last fifteen minutes he had been vainly endeavoring to gain foothold for conversation. By the time he had thought of an appropriate addition to the talk, the topic had changed, and he had to get his bearings again. He was puzzled by unfinished and cabalistic speeches, all of which seemed to have the knack of evoking laughter. In fact, he had never been among people whose laughter was so idiotically frequent and inapropos.

"Listen, listen," cried Ysobel Ruddle, clapping her hands. "Mr. Rathbun improvises. Let us catch the crumbs."

The red-bearded poet stood on the outer edge of her circle, reciting.

"What is it all about?" said June.

"You know Gardner Smith, who calls himself an artist?"

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"And he lisps."

"Let's have those first lines again, Rathbun."

"Thereth a young painter perthon named Smith,
Whoth paintingth are thomewhat a myth,"

recited Rathbun with grotesque solemnity.

"I didn't catch the last line, either," said Richard.

"Though what he doth beth ith to kith,"

repeated Rathbun, turning his back on the group.

"Lovely," Ysobel cried. "I dare you to fit a rhyme to my name, Kitty." Kitty was her favorite epithet for the poet Rathbun, because, she said, he belonged to the Angora school of writers. The conversation became decentralized again, while Rathbun on a log meditated gloomily.

"You've stumped him, Ysobel," cried Dick.

"Do you refer to his seat?" she tossed back.

Rathbun was unheeding of the pleasantries. Alison sipped her tea by Enoch Holme, and the stout lady descanted on spiritualism. She had blond hair, imprisoned by a fine net over her forehead, a dry, powdery skin, and glass blue eyes surrounded with delicate radiating wrinkles.

"There is certainly more to this new development than you orthodox people are willing to admit," she said, politely including Enoch Holme in her would-be mystical gaze. "We must not shut our eyes to the truth, and, of course, every one admits that the science of mind is far better understood in the East than in the West."

When a stout woman begins on spiritualism she can no more be checked than a wild mustang.

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"Mrs. Davenant—you know her, Mrs. Hollister, she read a paper before our Abracadabra Circle on the subjective mind—has done some wonderful things for me, wonderful, since my husband died."

The stout lady's voice became sentimental, and she held a duchess-trimmed handkerchief in readiness. "I have received messages from poor dear Anson that were as like him as possible."

"Is she the medium who is particularly in touch with the Greek philosophers?" asked Mrs. Hollister.

"Yes, yes," was the mournful answer. The stout lady was piqued at being swerved from poor dear Anson before the tears had come.

"Oh, I know her," said Alison, in clear, smiling tones. "Some one asked her for a message from Cantharides, and he spoke with all the wisdom in the ancients."

"Silence," commanded Dick Hollister, standing some distance away. "After a lucid interval, Rathbun relapses."

"Go ahead, Kitty," called Ysobel Ruddle, her face frankly wreathed with smiles.

Rathbun began sonorously:

"There's a daring young person named Ruddle,
With poses the brain to befuddle.

She's a *tableau vivant*,

And a *café chantant*,

But what she does best is to cuddle."

There was an instantaneous burst of enthusiastic approval, the last line especially seeming to touch a familiar string by the buzz of merry talk that ensued. Ysobel herself laughed more gleefully than any of them.

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"Oh, dear," thought Alison, "what will Mr. Holme think of us all?"

She glanced furtively at his face. The calm, keen blue eyes travelled from Rathbun to Mrs. Ruddell and back again. He wondered if a gathering of Elk Mountain people would offer as much unintelligibility to an outsider as did this gathering to him.

"After all," the stout lady continued, "this elimination of desire is a beautiful thought. The root of human unhappiness is discontent, is it not, Mr. Holme?"

"It is sin," answered Enoch in a practical voice. He did not know how much out of fashion "sin" and "stubborn-heartedness" were.

"Oh, but sin, Mr. Holme, what is the root of that?" The argument proceeded glibly. "Discontent again, malice, envy, jealousy, all the failings that we poor creatures fall heir to, even the coarser crimes, theft, forgery, murder—are they not instigated by inordinate desire?"

She paused rhetorically and was surprised by Enoch's answer.

"Madam, the instigator is the devil."

The devil, except as a climax for after-dinner wit, had so long been relegated to her limbo of things unfashionable, along with hoop-skirts, prayer-meetings, and the wide, wide world, that both ladies started. Then she gathered herself together with renewed courage. What an opportunity it was for opening the eyes of this narrow and dogmatic young preacher to the sweet vague of the new religion and also for sharpening her own intellectual claws upon the bark of his rustic ignorance.

"By the devil, Mr. Holme, the Syrian fanatic sym-

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bolizes the forces of evil within us which drag us downward. We pass through our various phases of existence, from short-lived protozoans, up through higher animal life, till we become what we now are, sentient human beings, all the while conquering and outliving these troublesome forces, this mythical devil. At last we shall be Christs, when we have succeeded in eliminating desire."

Enoch's silence convinced her of victory. In truth, having taken her measure, although she was to him a new type, he had made up his mind that a fool should be answered according to his folly.

"To eliminate desire, that should be our strong desire. That is our salvation."

She waved a fan slowly to and fro, in placid consciousness of her invincible argument.

"How about the desire to eliminate desire?" asked Enoch. The stout lady changed the subject.

"That was cruel of you, Mr. Holme," laughed Alison, leading the way to the out-door studio, "but it is the only good thing that's been said this afternoon."

They passed Richard, sitting on Ysobel's cape and listening to one of her audacious stories. "To where, beyond these voices, there is peace," said Alison, as they entered the rustic door.

CHAPTER X

In the Studio

A MIGRATORY blue-bird, on a blackberry vine by the door of the studio, sat and swung. He poured his little heart out on the dreamy bar of afternoon sun.

"Listen, he is singing of the north woods," said Alison, "of this wilderness he is leaving."

"It sounds to me like a song of the future," Enoch replied.

"Fár-away, fár-away," warbled the bluebird.

"Do you hear?" Alison said. "That is the past, already so far away."

"Which is farther—the past or the future?" asked Enoch, smiling at Alison's quaint, unconscious gesture.

Alison shut her eyes hard to make herself feel like a point in space.

"The past, even yesterday, is miles behind me, miles and miles; I cannot even touch it. But here is the future—right here in front—"

Still, with shut eyes, she reached out a hand to catch at the vague notes in the sunshine. It occurred to Enoch to put himself before her, as the future upon which she should open her eyes. Then he thought of the little memorandum in his pocket-book,

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and that he did not yet know her well enough to confess his temerity.

"How do you see things, Mr. Holme? Has everything color and shape and dimension?"

"I don't quite understand you," said Enoch, feeling distinctly clod-like beside this curious young person.

"Abstract ideas, names, dates. Now the multiplication-table has always been to me a trellis built in squares, with the numbers like little black devils running nimbly up and down."

"Is it so, indeed?" said Enoch, wondering which one of them had gone demented.

"And the alphabet," continued Alison, "is a tall old locust-tree, with the letters hanging on like queer-shaped fruit, and Z at the very tip-top."

Alison took delight at times in bewildering people, but Enoch, catching the twinkle in her eye, laughed sympathetically.

"You are very—"

"Quaint," supplied Alison, demurely.

"Different," finished Enoch. "But why should the end of the alphabet be at the top?"

"I wonder. Perhaps it is the hardest and the last to learn.

"Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough,
Atop on the topmost twig—which the pluckers forgot somehow,
Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now."

"Whose?"

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"I believe Sappho's. But I shouldn't quote her to you," said Alison, mischievously, "violet-weaving, softly smiling Sappho!"

"Am I so—so—"

"Different?" said Alison, again mischievously.

"I suppose I am," Enoch replied. "But then you are, also. Don't two differences make similarity?"

Alison laughed.

"I am not such a clod after all," inwardly rejoiced Enoch in his folly.

There was some further chaff between them, the fragile barrier between a man and a woman mutually attracted. A wall of commonplace grew between them till Enoch asked:

"What is the color and shape of"—he had it in his mind to finish with *love*—"of friendship?"

He broke off a spray of clematis-silk, green and fuzzy, that tormented his ear, and laid it in Alison's lap. She let the loving tendrils coil around her first finger. The wall between them fast crumbled.

"What is the color and shape of friendship?" Alison smilingly replied, lifting her finger in its silken sheathing. "The fitting of one temper to another."

Then she saw a look in Enoch's eyes that caused her to ask, with amusing irrelevance,

"Do you like music, Mr. Holme?"

"Very much. You?" he was compelled to add in his turn another stone to the wall.

"Yes; but I am a listener, not a performer. When June plays the 'Invitation to Waltz' or the 'Moonlight Sonata,' I float away on a wonderful sea to such a land! I ask her what her thoughts are when her fingers have such magic, and she says, 'That I had

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screwed the piano-stool one turn higher.' Extraordinary, isn't it?"

From this the talk went ranging till it came back to music and to Sararose. Alison had heard her sing and thought she had a voice of unusual promise. A musical education for her was discussed, and Enoch expressed his desire that she should win distinction and give her voice to the service of God.

"By which you mean, I suppose, any sincere self-expression," said Alison, "whether it should happen to be oratorio or light opera."

But this was not Enoch's meaning, as he proceeded to make clear, expressing an emphatic disapproval of all forms of dramatic art.

"Aside from moral grounds, it seems to me a childish, even primitive, expression. Although, Miss MacDonald, I will freely confess I have never been to a play or an opera."

"Why is it immoral?" asked Alison, wonderingly.

"I can only judge from what I know of the average actor's life, of the standard of morality exhibited by the average play."

"How do you account for the dramatic instinct, Mr. Holme?"

"Vanity, the craving for notoriety, the desire for morbid excitement—"

"You think it possible that so many people are so deeply moved to devote their whole lifetime to an absorbing occupation—for such unworthy motives?"

Enoch was astonished at her earnestness.

"How do you account for it, Miss MacDonald?"

"It seems to me, like everything else, a method of self-expression. Our lives are ordinarily so cramped,

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so conventional, that we miss the fullest opportunity to live out our capacities of emotion and sensibility. An actor, in his range of parts, may express himself frankly, fervently, freely, as he never can in life. In so far as his acting is an expression of himself, it is successful. That is why, I believe, so many people who have no dramatic talent long for the stage. They are in a cage and, like the starling, they cry to *get out*."

"Are you one of these?" asked Enoch.

"Do you think that's fair?" Alison retorted, smilingly. "Well, I will confess. I have had secret longings to be another Duse."

"What is that?"

"Soulful mouth and the tragedy of the centuries in your eyes! But I've suffered disillusion. Dick tells me that in form and feature I'm a born sou-brette."

"Explain, please." Enoch was amused, despite himself, at his own ignorance and Alison's rollicking definitions.

"A pretty ankle, china-blue eyes, and tantalizing lips," said Alison, provokingly.

Enoch was not quite sure whether he approved such explicitness.

"Oh, by the way," he said, emboldened by the spirit of the hour, "here is something I want translated."

He drew from his pocket-book the treasured memorandum and submitted it to the girl beside him. It was delightful to hear her laughter.

"You don't think it impertinence?"

"Far from it—a piece of delicate flattery. There's an egoistic importance to everything that relates to

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one's self. I was awfully rushed that day; I remember it well."

She filliped the scrap of paper with a smile.

"It's like a piece out of a diary, isn't it? How did you ever happen to keep it?"

"I didn't happen to," Enoch replied, tersely. Alison hastened to speak.

"Mend Mary's doll. Mary is my sister, as you probably know. The little girl with the pink bows out there by the hammock. Isn't she a darling? Swâmi? That is the blond lady's Hindoo teacher. I went to some lectures with her last winter. Hat for Lohengrin. Lohengrin? The opera with the swans in it. It was a first-night, too; Dick took me."

"Dick again," thought Enoch. He resented Dick's laughing eyes and shapely chin.

"Was the hat very beautiful?" he asked aloud, because he liked to hear Alison talk about herself and about things feminine. It was odd he had not found such subjects attractive before. He could not remember a single hat that Sararose had ever worn.

"Let me see. It was crushed and scallopy-looking, drooping on one side. Dahlia-colored and a very bewitching jewelled buckle under the brim."

Enoch had a clear mental conception of this remarkable head-dress.

"On the audacious side," added Alison, in an effort for accuracy.

"If it was half as becoming as that coif," began Enoch, gallantly—for in truth the white-lapped cap did set off to perfection the felicitous coils of Alison's ripply black hair.

Alison let the memorandum slip from her fingers to the log-floor.

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"Oh no," cried Enoch, "it is my property still," and he replaced it in his pocket-book with immense care.

From this the conversation somehow became serious again. Alison revealed to Enoch her heterodoxy. Her sincerity compelled his respect, but her "unbelief" saddened him.

"Self-expression the end of living!" he exclaimed.

"Why should we live to glorify God?" she asked. "According to your creed, he is already glorious enough. According to mine, we ourselves are heaven and hell—are God."

Enoch wondered if he were dull of comprehension.

"But, after all and beyond all, what is the prize, the reward?"

"I see," she murmured. "You are right—there is a reward. It is love."

Her far, indefinite gaze included him. The man's head swam with the sweetness of the look.

"Divine love," he made himself say.

In the confusion of his senses he hardly distinguished her answer, but it came to him afterwards.

"Yes, for all love is divine."

CHAPTER XI

The Raspberry Gatherers

TYKE LOISEAU came down the road beside his oxen. He was bringing back a load of hay from Saranac. There was little enough fodder grown at Elk Mountain. He whistled outside the white-painted gate over which nasturtiums were blazing.

"Gee-haw. Whoa there!"

He leaned over the gate and whistled again. It was high noon, and this was a good stopping-place. Sararose appeared on the piazza with some sewing in her hands.

"Good-morning, Tyke. Stop in a while?"

"Don't mind if I do," he answered, with shame-faced willingness. "Enoch in?"

"No, only Daddy."

Tyke unhitched his oxen and let them graze in dual amity by the road-side. Sararose led him into the dark parlor, where cretonne-covered chairs were ranged stiffly around the room. Enlarged crayon portraits, with all the bland and unlined vacuousness of country idealism, hung against the striped wall-paper. Under a glass globe in a corner were some wax flowers. In the sitting-room beyond, Tyke saw the sunlight filtered through green blinds and Daddy sitting on the rag carpet, taking out bast-

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ings from some feminine garment in process of making.

"Hey, pippy, pippy," chirruped Daddy to his green canary that sang in a cage by the window. The bird responded, and the two voices mingled cheerily with the snipping of Daddy's scissors.

"He's helping me this morning," said Sararose, in answer to Tyke's look, but she did not ask him within, so he sat down rather awkwardly. The parlor oppressed him. She stood still absent-mindedly, with her threaded needle and bunch of sewing in her hands.

"Sit down and make yourself miserable," Loiseau said, with uneasy jocularity.

Sararose was unhappy that morning and had been crying. The reaction after the dance had set in. Her life seemed unsatisfactory. Everything was dull and monotonous. She felt there were such possibilities of happiness, but forbidden to her. Young men with patent-leather shoes and pink finger-nails, smiles, compliments, laughing eyes, music, society, everything that Elk Mountain was not, were spread before her in hopeless panorama. Just before Loiseau came she had driven her needle under her thumb-nail and had burst into petulant tears.

"I saw Mame Kitripp at Saranac, and she sent her love to you," said Loiseau.

"Thank you," Sararose listlessly replied. What did she care about tall, high-cheeked Mame Kitripp, with her new ochre-yellow house and the fat, bald baby?

She sat down by the window, raising the shade part way, but with her shoulder to the light, and began to cross-stitch whalebones into the seams.

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"Hain't ye got nothing to say to me?" Loiseau hitched forward in his chair and looked earnestly at Sararose. "Ye ain't mad?"

"Dearie," piped Daddy from the other room, "I want ye to see the pattern I'm cuttin' ye."

He brought into the parlor a colored fashion plate, a lithographic lady, insect-waisted and smiling, holding a diminutive parasol in one unanatomical hand and leading an impossible child by the other.

"Going-away gown," he cackled, raising the shade by the cord pulleys and turning his pink, wrinkled face towards Loiseau and Sararose.

"When you go away on your wedding tour with Tyke, you can wear it: 'pastel blue with bell-skirt and train.' I know young people's ways. I heerd ye whisperin' abaout it."

"Yes, Daddy, it'll be a pretty going-away gown," answered Sararose, gravely.

Loiseau realized that this was a providential opportunity, and his hands grew clammy at the thought. Daddy toddled back to his shears and rag carpet.

Sararose moved to the further end of the sofa, away from the intensity of the black eyes and waiting lips. What thin, leathery cheeks he had!

"Don't ye want to live in Saranac, Sararose, an' go to the opery show when it comes, an' take pianner lessons? An', Sararose, I do love ye so. I do love ye."

She was sure he would kiss her, and she shuddered involuntarily at the thought of his mustache and rough chin. So she rose repellently, saying: "Oh, Tyke, don't talk to me like that."

Then the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard outside. Richard Hollister, leaning over the sweet-pea

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vines, tapped with his riding-stick on the little window.

"And is the mountain-rose blooming this morning?" he called out, gayly. He caught a glimpse within of a light dress and a gleaming head.

"By all that's holy," scowled Loiseau. "What on airth are ye doin' with thet camp-dandy Hollister?"

Sararose untied her blue and white gingham apron, displaying a white muslin one underneath.

"Let me go, Tyke. It's some message for John probably."

"The devil it is," Loiseau muttered, releasing his hold on her wrist.

He pushed past her out of the door and strode down the little geranium-bordered path to the gate. He did not recognize a jovial salute from the horse-back figure.

"Smiling fool," he thought, as he gee-hawed his oxen to their task again.

"Splendid types, these mountaineers," was Richard's genial comment, as he tied his horse and mounted the piazza steps. Sararose stood at the top, her blue-green eyes alight, and her recent tears leaving only a shade of wistfulness on her spirituelle face. The faded pink of her newly ironed calico blended with the tones of her hair. Richard sank into the creaky rocker and took off his hat. His damp hair clung becomingly to his forehead.

"I'm errand boy for the camp this morning," he explained, laughingly. "Fifty two-cent stamps from Eddie's; I nearly knocked him over with the magnitude of the purchase; shade hat for Mrs. Ruddle (mustn't go over a quarter); stick of striped candy for Mary; block of writing-paper for Rathbun."

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Hollister numbered off on his fingers as he spoke. "And five quarts of raspberries from anywhere. Couldn't get them at Eddie's, so came here. Do you accept my apologies, Miss—I mean Sararose?"

He laughed and she laughed, and the morning was bright.

"Your black-browed swain is looking back at you, there by the bend of the road."

Sararose waved her hand at poor Tyke. There was no response.

"We have only three quarts in the house. Azzy and I picked them last night, but there are plenty more on the vines, Mr. Hollister."

"Good, and the vines are not far away?"

"Just behind the house."

They both stood by the end railing and looked out towards the garden.

"Behind the row of currant bushes."

"I don't see them."

Richard found it of the utmost importance that he should see the raspberry vines. "There?" and he purposely pointed towards the strawberry patch.

"Those are strawberry vines," laughed Sararose. "Raspberries grow on bushes."

"Excuse me," Richard replied, with docility. "Put your hand over my shoulder and direct my finger. Thank you, now I see them."

It was very amusing to have this sweet-voiced, little country girl leaning over his shoulder. Her fingers were very slim and delicate for a country Phyllis. Sararose, blushing to be so near him, began to step backward, but not before he had caught her hand in his and imprinted upon it a light kiss. Before she had time to be frightened he had released her

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and was examining the sweet-pea vines with the air of a connoisseur.

"They are thriving, aren't they? I must bring my mother up here, if I may. She's a famous gardener, or thinks she is; but your flowers beat hers, Sararose."

"Dearie," called Daddy, querulously, "aren't you going to cook dinner? I've set the table, and it's 'most one o'clock."

Sararose blushed again. It was very embarrassing to be reminded of prosaic things when a caller like Richard Hollister stood on the piazza. But he was not in the least disconcerted.

"Dinner? To be sure. I beg your pardon."

"Please don't hurry away. That is only Daddy."

"May I stay?"

"I meant, what about the raspberries, Mr. Hollister?"

"Truly, I had forgotten them. If you will keep me to dinner, Sararose, we will gather them together—yes?"

"I am afraid you will not like our dinner," hesitated the girl. "The boys aren't here, and I was just going to have fried potatoes and bacon and—raspberries and cream."

"Prime. And may I help you? I'm a first-rate hand at Saratoga chips."

It might have been a meal on Olympus that Sararose prepared, for all she knew of the preparation, so light was her heart as she stepped about the well-scoured kitchen. Daddy felt he had an appreciator in the sleek young man who sat opposite him, and descanted at large on experiences of his youth when he had kept the store which was now Eddie's, and

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it had been a gathering - place for well - known personages.

"Mr. Hollister, your grandfather, used often to spend an evening with me, and many the joke we would crack together. It was feast of reason and flow of soul, sir."

Sararose was surprised that her father could talk so well.

"He had bought a parcel of timber from me, a strip along the lake where one of your houses is now. 'Don't you give me a receipt, Johnny?' he said. I had it made out in my hand, but I wanted to bluff him. 'What d'ye want a receipt for, sir?' I said. Then he chuckled in a way he had. 'I see you depend on my honesty not to pay you twice,' he said to me. He would have his joke. A very pleasant man was your grandfather."

"Didn't you get it back at him?" inquired Richard, smiling at Sararose.

"I did, sir. It was not long after, one evening in September, a nipping cold night, too, and we sat by a roaring fire in the old store. Mr. Hollister was very bald, sir; had no more hair on his head at fifty than I have now. 'What's the likeness between you and your dog, sir?' I asked him. He had a hunter that was famous in those days, not one of these mongrel deer-dogs, but a beagle that showed his pedigree in every point. Your grandfather gave it up. He was always slow at guessing conundrums. 'You both make a little hare go a long way, sir,' I told him, and you should have heard him laugh. Gad! I thought he would die."

The old man consumed himself with inward quaking laughter. His two listeners joined him sympa-

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thetically. When dinner was over Sararose put on her best sun-bonnet, a pink dimity affair with a ruffle and wide strings, gave Richard a sunburned straw hat belonging to one of the boys, and they went out together, with tin pails on their arms, to the raspberry patch.

"You take that row and I'll take this," directed Sararose, shyly.

Between the tall bushes he could just see the fluttering of her sun-bonnet and hear the soft dropping of the berries into the pail. They called back and forth to each other like children.

"How many have you?" she asked, as they both emerged at the bottom of a row.

"Only so many. I am very slow," he admitted, "and they are hard to find."

"You must look under the leaves," she instructed him earnestly, "and see, down low near the ground are the very best ones."

She showed him the dark red berries in their shady hiding-places, almost falling from the stem with ripeness.

"You see they come off at a touch," said Sararose, feeling quite superior with the amount of information she was able to impart. "You must be careful that you don't lose them."

"I think we had better work together," said Richard, trespassing boldly on her row. "Please put your hand here while I knock these fellows off."

Raspberry picking was delightful under such circumstances, and Sararose regretted that her pail was so rapidly filling.

"May I be your hired man?" he asked her, smil-

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ing into the pink sun-bonnet. "It would be so much nicer than slaving in an office."

"What do you do, Mr. Hollister?"

"I sit in an office, beastly little hole, ten by twelve, and add up figures. Don't you pity me?"

Richard's labors at the Newark office were not those of a galley-slave at the oars. His father had frequently to prod him into closer application to business.

"It's very dull here in the winter," Sararose answered, wistfully. "The only strangers are the lumbering men who smoke and drink by the hotel bar. The snow is so deep that you can't walk a dozen yards, and it takes two weeks to pack the roads enough for sleighing."

"Snow-shoeing?"

"Yes, but only the men go on snow-shoes, and they're off in the woods weeks at a time, cutting and drawing. Then, when the thaw comes, there's the log-driving on the Saranac."

"And what do the women do?"

"They darn socks and nurse the babies," Sararose said, with humorous contempt. "Oh yes, and make rag carpets."

"No parties?"

"Sometimes we have rag parties, like a quilting bee. We sew the long strips together and wind them up in a huge ball for the weaver. Then we pass round cider and nuts and fruit-cake. I hate it," she added, vehemently. "You stain your fingers, and the women do nothing but gossip."

"But now it's summer and raspberry time," said Richard, gayly.

"And still I'm staining my fingers," Sararose

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pouted playfully, holding out towards him her little red-tipped fingers.

A very ready pupil she was, and she knew her hands were pretty. Tyke had often told her so.

"Ah," Richard was very sympathetic, holding the little hand in his and rubbing the fingers with his large, fine, linen handkerchief.

"Don't, please," cried she; "you will stain your good handkerchief."

"All the better; then I shall have something to remember you by, see?"

He held it triumphantly.

"And I shall not have it washed."

Sararose's face instantly grew grave. Yes, the time would come when he would be gone and there would only be a handkerchief to "remember her by." It would be an incident to him, and then he would forget it entirely. Her sensitive lips quivered as she turned to the vines again, seeing them through a mist.

"But what will you remember me by?" asked Richard, pensively; "for I won't be forgotten."

He put his pail down, and standing quite close to her between the thick, sheltering bushes, tipped her face up towards his with a caressing touch under the chin. She was tempting, with her childlike eyes and sweet, pouty lips in the sun-bonnet's glow.

"You little pink rose, will this do?"

He bent over and kissed her lips.

Such a fresh, dewy kiss, he wanted another, but she ran away from him, willing and yet unwilling. Was he making love to her? It was all so different. She put a raspberry row between them and went on picking, breathless, half smiling, ecstatic.

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“Wow,” cried Richard. “I have just eaten a berry, and it tasted like red pepper and bay rum.”

“It was one of those three-cornered bugs,” laughed Sararose, parting the bushes and peeping through at him.

CHAPTER XII

At Lost Inn

THE Swiss chalet, gabled and shingled and dove-gray with the passage of many winters, stood alone on its mountain-side, locked in by the black spruce forest. Far below in the valley, a country road wound up the hill, merging into a lane, bordered by golden-rods, which in turn melted into a trail through the sugar maples, and then one lost one's way through the black spruce and balsam, unless one followed the path cut by Enoch Holme. A little space of cleared land in front of the inn still resisted the encroaching undergrowth of striped maple, yellow birch, and witch-dapple, tangling the bases of the tall shafts.

Enoch had been busy for several days in cutting timber about Lost Inn. With every tree that fell the outlook increased in wonder. He had asked the Hollisters to Lost Inn, and they were coming for the view.

She was the woman he had been waiting for. With every blow of his axe he cut down an obstacle to their love. He had seen her for the first time two weeks ago. He had known her for a lifetime. Waking, sleeping, her face was always with him. A last blow with his axe, then he stepped to one side. The tree toppled over. What a vista transpired! One saw, as in a picture-frame, green hills, purple range beyond

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range. The spice-laden wind blew freshly. Although it was still early in the afternoon the high scudding clouds were faintly rose-hued. Their fantastic shapes were endlessly changing. Cloud-shadows lay on the country below him and moved mysteriously. To Enoch's fancy they were great, slow thoughts. How she would enjoy such an outlook. He could see her standing beside him. Now he recalled every turn of her head, droop of eyelid, inflection of voice, of that memorable afternoon. The beautifully modelled head with the ripply masses coiled at the curve of the neck, for she had not worn her coif as a Bretonne should. Her eyelids drooped over long eyes, curiously almond-shaped. Her skin was pale, but with the velvety bloom of a butterfly's wing. He had heard some people discussing her after that first Sunday. They said she was odd-looking and not pretty. Perhaps she is not pretty, but she is his ideal. Would she want the branches of that birch lopped off a little? Yes, now Marcy stands out, austere, magnificent.

Her voice was more musical than any music. He had never known before that there were such depths in women's voices. No, it was only this one woman's voice that contained such harmonies. Where should she sit when she came to Lost Inn? She would surely be with them. Here, on this stump, with the splintered upright for a back—he could see her now. He spread out his coat on the white wood, as if indeed she were to sit beside him. It was wrong of him to think so much of hair and lips and eyes. Was this love? But he loved her soul, too—the radiant soul she had shown him during their long talk in the summer studio. And those hands—strong, supple hands, not

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small and blue-veined like Sararose's. He could imagine the firm touch of her fingers.

"I cannot help it," he said, aloud. "I cannot but think of your hands and your lips and your eyes. They are so alive, and your soul is in them."

He waited as if expecting an answer.

"Yes, yes, I know you," he answered the inaudible voice, "and you know me. Are we not made for each other?"

.

"Surely not. You could not disappoint me. You are the only woman."

.

"Yes, your friends shall be my friends. I shall love them for your sake."

.

"You will learn to share my ideals. They are not austere, as people think them. They are your own, but clothed in different language."

All this time he spoke aloud, and Alison, unseen, answered him.

A sudden breeze shook the fir-trees and sent some little cones rattling to the ground.

"Egotist!" he muttered, "why should she argue her unfitness? She is far above you. You are unworthy of her—Egotist!"

The solitary mountain-side below him lay bathed in afternoon light. The bright green of birches mingled with the purple of spruce and the blue of juniper. Over the flat, rocky face of distant Copperhead a cloud darkly hung. Then the white rain on

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that far upland fell like a sheet let down, hiding the mountain-top. Along the neighboring hill-sides the sun basked on checkered fields and white specks of houses. The woods were very silent about him. A squirrel scampered across the unfinished veranda of Lost Inn. He could hear the rattle of its little feet. Behind the inn the spruce forest closed darkly.

"Is not God's earth beautiful?" exclaimed he, rising. "Alison, is it not beautiful?"

.

"I know that you love it just as I do."

.

"No, no, do not say that. My soul is tied down by unworthy thoughts. You will help me to be great."

.

"I shall learn so much from you—sweetness, humility, lovingness."

.

"I believe what you say of me. I once thought God had destined me to great things. Your hand will lead me to them."

.

"And you will not regret that you give me your hand and your heart?"

Enoch stretched his arms out to empty air.

"For your sake, love, I would sacrifice all the world—all but the love of God."

.

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"You shall not sacrifice earthly desires for me. I will bring them to your feet, and together we shall lay them before God's throne."

"Together, Alison?"

His arms closed upon empty air. The sighing fir-trees answered him. As Enoch went on with his work, he pondered the relations between man's purpose and God's providence, between God's providence and the chances of life. Is it indeed God's providence, ordaining the strange mixture of events, that thwarts man's purpose? Does God bring together by a storm a man and a woman, and then separate them forever? Does God ordain this man to love that woman, cruelly, irremediably, and that woman never to know it? Does providence lead the bees to their hive in the old beech-tree and lead the hunter to burn them out? Does providence blow the east wind to kindle the hunter's abandoned fire and destroy acres of forest? Why should he, Enoch Holme, stand here in his cow-hides, felling trees on Snowshoe Slide, and Richard Hollister, in white flannels, drink punch from a glass cup by Lake Miquewaugu?

A pink cloud tore itself gently asunder and took the likeness of two lions, pursuer and pursued. Enoch watched them idly, sitting on the stump, his axe against his knee. The rosy, tumbled mane grew less bushy, faded away; the tail spread out, the feet stretched backward. It was no longer a lion, but a headless horse at full gallop. It was gone. The blue sky showed bare.

Men's lives are clouds, distorted by passing winds, the fantasy of some wilful artist. What is providence? What is fate? What is God? A figment of human brain. Man has made God in his like-

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ness. Enoch Holme, up! The afternoon is waning. It is not good to think too deeply. Act, act, act. There is a will that conquers fate. It is your own.

"Where now?" cried a voice somewhere below among the trees.

"Here, here!" another answered nearer.

"Whoop-la!" called a third voice. "Look out for the fallen tree, Alison!"

Enoch heard the horses' feet paddling on the soft duff of the underwoods. Then a little cavalcade appeared one by one, waving their hats to him as they broke through the brush. Colonel Hollister, in correct corduroy and top-boots, was followed by a younger man, who sat his horse loosely and wore clothes of clerical cut. Enoch noticed the long, dun-colored mustache and the roving eyes. Following them came June and Alison, in their clinging habits and picturesque sombreros. Underneath the broad white felt, with its insolent eagle feathers, Alison's face showed oddly demure.

"We have tracked the lion to his lair," said Colonel Hollister, genially. "Man, man, have you kept this to yourself all these years?" as he looked about him.

Enoch helped June from her horse, but before he could get to Alison she was down like a bird.

"Mr. Holme, Mr. Mayhew."

They shook hands, Enoch wondering at the dull eyes of the stranger and the gaunt cheeks. Thomas Mayhew, without appearing to notice, made an instantaneous mental record of Enoch's great size, long, homely mouth, steel-blue eyes, unusual forehead, and the scarred third finger of his right hand.

"Of Clough House," added Enoch.

"Colonel Hollister has told you of me?"

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"No one. I read the *Church Weekly*."

"Indeed?"

Mayhew, who had heard that Enoch was a preacher as well as forester, was surprised, not at the man's reading the *Church Weekly*, but at his facility in placing. Placing people is not a rural characteristic. Also, the notices of Mayhew's work in the *Weekly* had been grudging and inadequate.

"Very pretty, very pretty," pronounced Colonel Hollister in a business-like way, as Alison, her hand on his arm, was silent with the fulness of beauty.

Mayhew and Enoch became engaged in conversation upon the life of the woods. The occupations and character of the inhabitants passed under review. The difficult farming, the facilities for haying and pasturage, lumbering, with its incidents of winter camp and perilous log-drawing down the frozen log-roads, the rafting and driving with the spring thaws, milling, hunting, fishing, guiding, even the trivial occupations of gum-picking and pillow-making, interested Mayhew, as he heard about them from Enoch's lips. It was the clergyman's first visit to the woods, and Enoch delighted in his keen and intelligent questioning. The lack-lustre look, however, never left his eyes, and his big-boned, emaciated hands hung from his arms like useless appendages. As they walked about among the trees, Enoch pointed out to him the trees by name—maple, beech, basswood, and the black spruce with their tall shafts crowned by irregular tops.

"When there is interlucation," said Enoch, "the tree grows differently, branching out almost to the ground like that tree below in the open."

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"Environment, environment," said Mayhew, duly oppressed by the weight of some spiritual metaphor.

"Austere and narrow, if there is struggle for the light," added Enoch, feeling Mayhew's mind. The two men looked upward along the tall, spindling shaft.

"That should teach tolerance of the intolerant," pursued Mayhew. "Your creed, Mr. Holme?"

"I have none but God, Christ, and the Bible."

"Too much. Man is enough." Mayhew caught the stern argument in Enoch's eye, and hastened to ask practical questions.

"No, there is not much pine in our woods now," said Enoch. "The spruce is the principal lumber. Its uses? These shafts as you see them are used in the round for spars and poles. The timber for everything from house-building, boat-building, to railroad ties and sounding-boards for pianos." He laid his hand thoughtfully on a black tree-trunk. "So we come into touch, Mr. Mayhew, here in our hermit camps with travellers by land and sea, and with folks at concerts and rich men's houses."

Alison was gathering ground-hemlock and wreathing her shoulders with it.

"Come, child," said June to her, "Mr. Holme is dripping streams of knowledge. Let's gather at the fount."

Lifting their heavy skirts in their dainty hands, they stepped over the fallen and fungus-clad timber.

Enoch, who was not used to note grace in human forms, as he did in bounding fawns and startled hares, noted for the first time its grace. The men were discussing the age of the forest trees when the girls approached them.

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"How old is this baby?" asked Alison, pulling up by its strong, wiry stem a little foot-high fir-tree.

"You have uprooted the growth of thirty years," answered Holme, smiling magnetically at Alison.

"The monster that I am," she cried.

"They grow slowly, dwarfed by the darkness here in the underbrush," said Enoch, touching with brotherly sympathy a spruce that reached to his shoulder. "This tree must have been born before the Civil War. It is a survival of the fittest, Miss MacDonald, with us of the forest."

"You love the trees," said Alison.

"They are my brothers," he answered. "When I put an axe to them they are only lumber. But in felling a tree I am careful that its fall does not injure a weaker neighbor. It would pain me needlessly to trouble one of the least of these."

"You are a sentimentalist, Mr. Holme," said Colonel Hollister, looking at him over his gold-rimmed glasses with shrewd kindliness.

"On the contrary, quite utilitarian. I am a forester, and this is a forester's business."

"Talking about the age of trees," said Mayhew, in his heavy, listless voice, "you astonish me. You really astonish me, Mr. Holme. As you see, I am quite ignorant of the subject. I was brought up in the Black country, in England, sir; I worked as a miner till I was twenty-six. Since then I have been in cities. You can understand that I have not had much opportunity to study trees."

Enoch's bushy, light-brown brows drew down over his eyes till his eyes became merely two blue steel lines. It was a way he had when his mind was in-

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tent. He understood now the heavy look, the burned-out gaze, the knotted misshapeness of the thin, yellow hands. He felt there was great strength in Mayhew, and the long endurance of a tired strong man.

"Tell us about your life, Mr. Mayhew," said June, leaning forward across a wind-fallen tree, with her arms crossed over her black-habited knees. Mayhew fascinated her with all the fascination of the homely and unusual to beautiful young things. He looked at her dully, no smile behind the tan mustache, exactly as he might have looked at a dead leaf blown to the log by a puff of wind.

"It is Mr. Holme's life I am interested in this afternoon. It is not often one meets a man who lives at the heart of nature."

Enoch, standing there in his wrinkled, mud-colored clothes and rusty boots, without the erectness of a military carriage or the slouch of a working-man, seemed in some way a part of the forest. His close-cropped beard was reddish brown, like the dead spruce needles, and his bushy eyebrows and thick hair made his head leonine. As he surveyed the little group—Colonel Hollister, with the executive mouth and mathematical eyes; Thomas Mayhew, with the inherited peasant in the very set of his feet; June Hollister, with the immobile beauty of twenty years, and Alison, with the inexplicable something that drew one's heart towards her—there rushed over him the divinity of human type, and he became hopeful.

"Relatively," he thought, "there is no more chasm between us two than between her and her surroundings."

The determination that he suddenly took drew deep downward lines in his face, but he roused himself

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to interest his visitors. His heart was occupied elsewhere.

"Shall I show you some of my forestry work?" he said, leading the little party out of the dense wood into the open. They gathered about the tree he had been felling.

"The autobiography of a spruce. In the damp, still gray of a June morning three centuries ago, I pushed my downy green tip through the dead leaves and looked about me. An old beech-nut I had knocked aside was the only thing as small as I. Black, scaly giants stood about me. Hundreds of feet above, the great trees spread to the light. At noonday one ray of sun fell tremblingly on the glossy beech-nut and then scampered off like a fawn. With early afternoon all was twilight and then night. The days, the months, the years went by in darkness and struggle. I was not so big as the littlest bear cub that tumbled out of its tree hole near me to snub up the nuts. Yet thirty times I had seen at night the yellow moon of harvest look down on me, and thirty times the beech-tree had dropped its green balls, and the little bear cubs of my infancy were stiff with age. Thirty times I had fallen asleep with the white blanket on my plummy branches, and thirty times awakened with the song of the sap in my blood and the spring stars glimmering kindly. Still my silent neighbors towered above me to the sky, and the tips of my branches brushed their shafts far below the unheeding heads. Little seedlings had sprung up beneath parental trees, and I had watched them perish. Mother bear had torn them up for breakfast. Fawns had nibbled them away. The darkness had oppressed them. I alone remained, struggling up-

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ward to that divine blue sky and the fellowship of my kind."

Enoch sought Alison's eyes merely for the pleasure of meeting them. "To be more precise," he went on, smiling, "I will take out my pocket-rule and magnifying-glass. Would you care to look?" He handed the glass to Alison. "He has left a record for each year. The rings are hard to distinguish with the naked eye."

"How do you estimate the age, Mr. Holme?" asked Mayhew, as Enoch folded up his rule.

"Roughly, by the diameter. We have made some actual counts for the State, and find on an average a thirteen-inch diameter for one hundred and seventy-three years; twenty inches for two hundred years, and so on. This tree might possibly be two hundred and some odd years of age."

Alison knelt by the stump, studying the rings through the glass.

"Why are they so narrow here, Mr. Holme? I am sure it means something."

"That records an extraordinary succession of cold winters, long before you were born, Miss MacDonald."

He stooped on one knee by Alison, glad of the moment's fellowship. "And this scar, it is the mark of an axe; let us see—"

They counted together from the outside bark, slim, white finger and the great, brown finger in partnership. Enoch fervently wished that all the knowledge of universal history might be engraved upon this friendly stump.

"Twenty-eight."

"Yes, twenty-eight years ago."

At Lost Inn

"How fascinating!" cried Alison, in almost child-like pleasure. "And to have my count come out right! This is what we called at college the laboratory method. June, will you look?"

"Thank you," said June, indifferently, declining the proffered glass. She wondered, as she often did, how Alison could interest herself in such trifles.

"And now I have planned another show for you," said Enoch, with boyish elateness, looking at Alison, and pointing towards Cape Mountain. "A way-faring shower."

Over the blue sides of Cape Mountain, some fifteen miles to the north, a brisk little shower was dancing.

"Is that rain?" asked June. "It's more like a gray cloud."

"See it stride!" cried Alison, her fingers playing at giant footsteps.

The shower blew along in puffs till the neighboring hills were blotted out, and Cape Mountain in its turn broke into laughter under its patch of blue sky. Then the shower, still approaching, a huge, purple cloud, bulged above Copperhead, its outlines defined in billowy shadows on the mountain's wooded sides. The village and fields below Lost Inn slept in golden light. The group by Lost Inn stood in pleased silence, watching the little drama.

"It's like a Princess Superba play," said June, "and we're waiting for the metamorphosis."

Enoch could hear Alison's quick breathing by his side. If only the rest of them were — no matter where — leaving him and her alone on the mountain. Before they knew it, a gray sheet flung itself into their eyes. A frolic of raindrops capered about them. Laughing and dripping, the party ran up the steps

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of Lost Inn. The wayfaring shower slammed noisily at the windows and pounded on the steps.

"How delightfully humorous!" cried Alison.

With a triple pantomime of her hand, she sketched the afternoon's episode. Circular thumb and first finger and the little finger's fastidious outward curl—the æsthetic flâneurs, monocle at the eye. A flap of the left hand, fingers loosely slanted—the brusque abandon of the elements. A few quick confused flutterings—the entirely human scramble for shelter. There was a laugh, and "You're a genius, Ally," said Colonel Hollister.

Alison folded her hands into repentant stupidity.

"Never again," she admitted. "I don't mean to, anyway."

This trick of the hands she had kept from her babyhood, naïvely unconscious of it most of the time.

Enoch piled up the logs in the fireplace, warning them meanwhile that the chimney smoked. It was dismal enough in the great unfinished hall, with the rain stamping out the landscape. Thomas Mayhew entertained them with the long-promised story of his life, from his Black country mining days to the almost incredible stroke of good fortune that made him a rich man. Then all the vicissitudes of his experience till these more recent years of work among the Russian Jews in New York. The setting sun poured in on them after the shower, inviting them to the porch to witness a world new as at dawning. It glittered like a wave, and a peabody bird, gone mad in a little juniper-tree, carolled at the top of his voice.

"The rainbow," said Enoch, solemnly, following Alison around a curve of the porch.

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It lay below them and above them, almost a perfect circle, barred with amazing clearness in the sky and sheeny against the earth. The bases disappeared among the evergreen trees just below them.

"We must call the others," said Alison, in hushed ecstasy.

"No," Enoch spoke, in a strange voice, and laid his hand on her arm. "We must have this minute to ourselves."

She felt the presence of a great suppressed emotion and was silent. Enoch kept his hand on Alison's arm and drew a sharp sigh. God's miracle of the rainbow and God's miracle of love. Should he speak? In a moment they would be interrupted. Should he speak? This dear, silent woman he could crush in his embrace! That dark eyelash and the creamy cheek!

"Alison," he began.

"Villany," cried June, coming around the curve of the porch, "there you stand drinking in the rainbow and not whispering a word of it. Double-dyed villany."

CHAPTER XIII

Up-Stream

It was a still morning in September, the water of Lake Miquewauga like gray silk, and a thin purple haze over the farther shore where fallow fires had been burning. The wooded slopes were braided with scarlet or bronze where the hardwoods interlaced with the evergreens of coiffers. There were skiffs and paddles and oars and punting-poles and guns and hampers and pouches and lanterns piled up by the camp pier, and, except unanimity of desire, every prospect of a hunting-party on the eve of departure. The excursionists, in the rough duns and tans of appropriate tweed and leather, stood bunched together, each animated with the desire of making his policy dominant. Crooked Lake, Elder River, and Blue Pond as desirable destinations had all in turn had their champions, only to be rejected on the plea of some one else's bad luck on previous expeditions.

"Crooked Lake," said June, "is a nightmare. Black flies so thick you can't see, and brambles to tear the eyes out of your head."

"Well, why not Blue Pond?" asked Edward. Junior, returning to the attack as blithe as ever. "I killed a ten-tined buck—"

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His wife laid her finger upon his lips.

"Don't begin on the ten-tined tune, dear. Besides, if you killed him, we should never find such another."

"And it takes all day to get there," added June, contumaciously.

The guides, stolidly contemplative, waited at one side while the camp folks began afresh. Enoch Holme, taking John's place as guide, was one of the number, and Sararose, invited by Alison, stood shyly by her, a big black hat on her copper braids.

"Have we discussed the manner of game?" asked Alison, with roguish eyes, throwing a new apple of discord into the group.

"Why did you do it?" asked Richard, reproachfully.

"On homœopathic principles. I'm sorry," said Alison, penitent.

"Strike me dead," said Mrs. Ruddle. "I'm talked blind, deaf, and dumb. I recant. I'll go anywhere and kill anything."

She sat down on an upturned boat, crossing her little ankles, and displaying the decided curves of her shapely leather-clad legs.

"Off we go, then."

The guides pushed the boats alongside and commenced the loading.

"Where is Nixie?" some one asked, as the people embarked. There was a general laugh.

"Hamlet with Hamlet left out," said Alison. "There he comes."

"I like this," drawled the painter, slouching towards them through the trees. "No, don't wait for

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me. It's all in my honor, but never mind that. Make tracks while I'm out of sight."

"'Came whiffing through the tulgy wood,
And bubbled as he came,'"

jeered Ysobel.

"'You are wrong, Father William, to stand on your head,'"

retorted Nixie, irrelevantly, as he gave Ysobel his hand to help her rise.

"Why kill at all?" exclaimed Alison, a sudden idea taking possession of her, as the guides put the rifles down in the bottom. "Let's hunt with the camera."

The idea pleased, Nixie especially declaring his disapproval of death-dealing devices.

June averred from positive knowledge that Nixie's gun was as harmless as his camera, but the matter was finally settled by private arbitrament between them. The guns were removed, and after some delay the cameras put in their places. Supernumerary guides were then dismissed, and the skiffs thus lightened prepared to push off.

"How comes it we're not wrangling over boats?" asked Alison. "I don't understand it."

Enoch, Sararose, and she occupied the *Out All Night*. Mr. and Mrs. Edward and June shared the *Happy Home*, and Ysobel, Richard, and Nixie placed themselves with great satisfaction in the *Tippy Canoe*.

There was a judicious distribution of cameras and

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commissariat, and, at Alison's suggestion, lanterns were added for flashlight pictures on the way home.

"Wait, wait," called a childish voice from the house, as the last boat made out. Mary MacDonald, in her scarlet coat and white sunbonnet, came flying down to the pier as fast as her little feet would carry her.

"Land of Goshen," said Richard, despairingly. "If the nursery begins to arrive."

There were traces of recent tears on Mary's little red cheeks. Her blue eyes were round with excitement.

"When I woken up, you were all gone," she said, reaching out her arms to Alison. "I ated my blekfus so quick. Auntie said plaps you would take me. Plea-seese."

The five-year-old baby's "please" was irresistible. She stood on the pier, with her little, dimpled hands outstretched to Alison, while Enoch poled doubtfully back towards shore.

"You will get so tired, darling," said Alison.

"No, no, no, no, Alison, I promise. I will be so velly good and not kly one bit."

"Not if the black flies bite you?" said Alison, reluctantly.

"Can't little gell kly when black flies bite like zis?" She screwed her little face up to indicate intensity of suffering, and every one laughed.

"Let her come on the strength of that," pleaded Mrs. Ned, "especially as this is close season for the insects. We will take her with us, Alison."

Enoch lifted the child into the *Happy Home*, and a new boat was added to the canoe fleet. It was agreed that Enoch should be guide and stroke canoe

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and take them where he would. The *Happy Home* went last, with Baby MacDonald delightfully ensconced between the two Hollisters, and, as Edward expressed it, fairly reeking with goodness.

Along the upper part of the lake the shores were dreary with blackened stumps and a young, ineffectual sprinkling of second-growth trees. Coarse rushes grew in shallow water and moose-plants spread their islets of leathery green. The source of the lake was a creek, wide and placid at the mouth, with the gnawed-out forests on either side—farther up stream, crooked as a succession of S's. There were occasional miniature rapids, but the creek was navigable for light skiffs, if well managed, some ten miles up the mountain-side.

They passed the blueberry swamps and saw the light smoke curling upward from the shanties of woodsmen on the hill-side. Enoch kept well ahead of the others, within shouting distance, but out of sight around the sharp loops of the creek. There were so many inlets and backwaters that the inexperienced would have found difficulty in keeping to the main creek, had it not been for Enoch's guiding voice. Alison faced him on her seat of hemlock boughs.

"Is it instinct that teaches you the way of the water?"

"I have travelled this stream too often to rely on instinct merely. In my boyhood days, there was lumbering done in this region, and before there were main travelled roads we took the creek up the mountain in the early fall, cutting the logging roads to use in the winter. In the spring I have gone down with many a raft when the waters were swollen by spring thaws."

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Enoch selected for lunching-place and point of departure for the camera-hunters a hard-wood ridge, one of those curious table-lands, seemingly built for human purposes of fortification, that are thrown up here and there on the mountain slopes. A few beeches and maples were golden and scarlet on its top, and below them was the cedar-clad descent, up which they had toiled from the creek. The ground was crunchy with thick white moss, embroidered with the crimson of trailing partridge vines, and picked out with red-globuled bunch-berries, primly centred in their trifoliate leaves.

Enoch gave Sararose his hand up the steep hill.

"You sighed, Sararose? You are not tired?"

"Tired at ten in the morning!"

"But you sighed, dear. Something troubles you."

Witness now the action of mind on mind, that wonderful chemistry of combination, transmitting liquids to solids, dissolving, crystallizing, obliterating, bringing out, all at the touch of a noiseless drop. So will two minds act on each other. Enoch knew that Sararose was troubled. Sararose was resolved that Enoch should not know the wherefore. Enoch was equally resolved that he should. The master-chemist manipulates his crucibles. Between this brother and sister the process was sometimes a quiet one, sometimes accompanied with gentle perturbation, often concluded by a crash like the combination of certain chemicals.

Enoch's will poured itself steadily upon Sararose. He held her hand within his arm, and looked at her.

"Well?"

"Nothing."

"You will feel better to have told me. Perhaps I can help you with it."

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"With what?"

"Srarose, don't you know that I love you? Why will you tease me?"

She would not be happy until she had told him. This tiresome love of his for her was always putting her in the wrong. Why did he need to take her little affairs to heart?

"If it is something serious—"

"No, no, nothing serious."

"Then, if it is only a trifle, don't hesitate, dear, to unburden yourself."

Perhaps it would be a relief to have him share it. She felt she had done a wrong. He would perhaps make light of it, and then surely her conscience would be clear.

"It is only about Tyke—"

The two minds gently ran together.

"Tyke?"

"I had promised to go with him to-day to the fair at Saranac!"

"You had promised?"

"He will be so angry when he finds me gone. You are not angry, Enoch?"

"But you had promised."

"This was so much nicer."

"A promise, Srarose."

"Any other day will do for the fair."

"And for Tyke?"

"Oh, dear—"

Enoch bent two stern eyes upon her.

"I am sorry. Forgive me, Enoch."

"Dear," he said, gently, "I am not the One to forgive."

A very great tenderness seized him for this little

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sister of his, so frail against temptation. A peccadillo forecast the future. He saw that she was not strong enough to stand alone. Enoch would have killed a man as easily as he would have broken a promise.

Sararose, leaning on Enoch's arm at the head of the ravine, was oppressed by his goodness. She could never meet his ideal. Her penitence was quickly succeeded by reaction and gayety. It was quite true that Enoch bore the burden of her sins. If he had not cared so much, she might have cared a little more.

Alison took her for a little stroll, and Sararose began to feel at ease. These dreaded strangers, after all, were of the same clay as she. The luncheon was spread. She caught the olives that Richard threw at her, and when the champagne bottles were opened, joined in the toast all round with the merriest of laughter, and just a little tremor at the heart, for fear of what Enoch might say when they were at home again. But he, too, seemed a different man from every day, taking his turn at anecdote and repartee, and replete with quaint backwoods humor.

"Isn't she a perfect Bacchante?" asked Ysobel, arresting the young girl's arm, as she lifted a glass to her lips.

Sararose flushed a deeper rose when she felt herself the momentary centre of attraction.

"Those parted lips, and the line of the neck and chin," went on Ysobel, like a connoisseur. "Quick, Richard, out with your camera."

Mrs. Ruddle adjusted Sararose's hair-pins, and let the loosened hair fall in fantastic fashion about her face. She twined its copper masses with partridge

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vines and gay leaves that Richard brought her. Sararose forgot how strange it was to hear herself talked about, for the delight of having Hollister's admiring gaze upon her, and the touch of his fingers about her forehead and chin, as he posed her for the camera. Nixon moved nonchalantly about, his hands in his pockets, squinting his eyes at this group and that to get the composition.

"It ought to inspire you, Nixie," said Richard, focusing his camera, and Sararose was supremely happy.

Then, from the height where they were, they discussed the mountain ranges that encircled them at a great distance, palest purple and dreamiest blue.

The walls of mountains do not wall in, but lead away, like heavenly high-roads built upward straight to eternity. Who that has seen the purple of sunset bathe and transfigure far peaks has not seen also mystic gates opened to his soul?

The tender, terrible thrill of stately distances pierced Enoch like a knife. Then the human chatter began, and all the peaks must be named for the voluble curiosity of those who easily forget.

"There is Mount Taseco," said Enoch, "where Colonel Hollister's tracts are, and the lumber-camps that your letters reached, Miss MacDonald, last winter. That glister of white on the top? It is snow."

So in turn were the other hills and ranges named—Mount Marey, Cape Mountain, and even Snowshoe Slide, with its mica-glisten, where a brook ran over the naked rock.

"Lost Inn is there," Alison pointed, "where we rode that flurrying afternoon."

Then it was between her and Enoch:

Up-Stream

“Do you remember?” and

“Where the white shower anointed us—”

“And the rainbow dried our feet.”

Till some one broke in with a simpleton's request for the reason why Cape Mountain was called “Cape Mountain,” and “I always thought it was called Katie's Mountain,” from June.

A sound of easy laughter from all, and an improvised legend of Mountain Kate from Alison.

“No one lived thereabout for many years,” said Enoch, “but an old St. Regis Indian, and when he offered the mountain for sale—as the story goes—they told him to k'ape it.”

CHAPTER XIV

Witchhopple Brook

"HAVE you ever seen Witchhopple Brook?" asked Enoch, who took the simple pleasure of a country-bred child in nature's various forms. A great pine-tree on the hill, a particular brook, a hidden fence corner where a purple orchid makes a yearly visit, a secret marsh that flashes every midsummer with the flames of the cardinal flower, an elm where a pair of thrushes make a royal home, a hedge where the white-throated sparrows rehearse their April jubilee, these to the country-bred child are part and parcel of his intimate inner life — "sights" to point out to the ignorant, goals to be sought, learning to be proud of. So a New Yorker might have asked:

"Have you seen old Trinity or the Washington Arch?" or even, "Have you heard the latest play or opera?" for Witchhopple Brook is something to hear as well as to see, and it is a more convincing proof of culture to know Witchhopple Brook than a hundred comic operas.

"No, but I want to," said Alison.

So they went there together. Now Witchhopple Brook is the most delightful little child that ever called the mountains mother. Elder River, even

Witchhobble Brook

in its early youth, has not the bewitching whimsicality of this fairy runlet.

"Here it is."

They had broken through a thicket of purpling rock-maple, and now they stood embowered among the trees, Alison caught among some prickly branches, like an enchanted princess.

"I don't see it."

"Don't you hear it?"

The clear, trickling voice of it wound into her senses. Enoch trampled down the underbrush, and made a window through the shrubbery.

"Look!"

The brook lay like a little child discovered in hiding, looking up at them with an innocent air of surprise.

"How rude of us to break in upon it without apology!"

"I think it may be for the first time in its life that humans have seen it—just here."

"Really!"

"It is a wild little creature, hedges itself about, and evades discovery. Did you ever notice, Miss MacDonald, how trees and inanimate wild things have personalities like people?"

"Yes, yes. See the sardonic grin on that old maple, leering at us sideways from his twisted cheek."

The frost-fissure on the sidewise-grained shaggy bark did look like a grim, cynical mouth.

"And the two birches growing together," went on Enoch, fantastically; "they are sisters, but how different!"

"The slimmer one droops like a languid girl," said

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Alison, throwing herself into the tree's pose, "and the stout one says, 'I can't be graceful, but I am sensible.' See how she spreads out her hands in deprecation."

Alison's dramatic fingers expressed the attitude so naïvely that Enoch laughed, and then she with him. It was strange how glad he was with her, perilously glad, like one who laughs in dreams. The gladness that comes from being with a beloved who loves not us is the heart-breaking gladness of one who snatches respite from death.

"Do you know," said Alison, "I feel it almost impertinent to stand in their stately presence and chatter about them. Who knows but they listen and understand?"

"Your cynical friend, at least."

They both glanced towards the gray old maple, who smiled with shifting irony.

"I believe that trees have a dim sort of consciousness, fold into their hearts all winter rustling green memories, and thrill in April with warm, outputting life. Then they must grow very wise when their hundredth birthday comes. How big and pitiful some pine-trees look, over the youngsters at their feet."

"A dim sort of consciousness," repeated Enoch, the steel-blue eyes swimming to misty blue. His forest became peopled with silent, wistful tree-souls.

"Now we strike an Indian trail."

"A trail?"

"There is not much sign of a road, is there, but yet, don't you see a vague sort of tendency in the underbrush to grow sparingly and fly apart? Don't you find an open space here and there, and under your feet a packed feeling?"

Witchhopple Brook

"I do, I do," said Alison, delighted.

"It is marvellous how long a trail persists. The red men may have made this one of their mysterious highways for thousands of years. We don't know their history, do we, so I am safe in saying my thousands. Then it is disused, fifty, a hundred years, but the trail is life; it hides, but it does not die. The animals choose it, perhaps, for their stealthy wanderings."

"Why are animals stealthy?" asked Alison. "It doesn't seem dignified."

"Another of men's conceits," remarked Enoch. "We only see them when we intrude."

"And then they are naturally a little self-conscious," said Alison, in quaint defence. "But I like this idea of yours about trails. It makes them seem living, too."

"A dim sort of consciousness," repeated Enoch. "Miss MacDonald, there is magic in you. You are peopling the forest with souls, and they will comfort me after—"

The almond-shaped lids of Alison's dark eyes revealed no embarrassment. He decided to finish in all calmness, according to his original thought.

"After you are gone. They will be friends in common—yours and mine."

"Thank you," said Alison. "It is beautiful to have the trees and brooks and trails for friends and reminders—"

"Although sometimes," Enoch ventured, "I shall long for a more human reminder."

They stood again by little Witchhopple Brook, that widened out in a meadow-plot, like a miniature beaver-meadow. The land sloped to it graciously, so that

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it seemed to lie in the hollow of a loving hand. Colored leaves fluttered downward, downward, downward, circling ever so gently, like delicate tributes into a lap. They lay around the edges of the brook-pool, rimming it with ruined gold.

"It seems," said Alison, "as if we had entered a charmed land. How the wind died down, and the sun came out, just as we stepped within this enchanted circle."

"You are the enchantment," said Enoch, very softly, and Alison did not answer.

The world suddenly vanished, and the wood turned to gold, and there lay the little lake, with one white cloud down in its middle, deeper than any depths of sea.

"It is curious how if you look at it in one way you see beautified golden trees drowning in clear glass, and one white cloud and blue sky, magically deep—do you see?"

"Yes," said Enoch, trembling. "That is when you are hoarding a dream."

"And in the other way, you see just about twenty inches of water and a crinkled mud bottom."

"That is reality," said Enoch. "Which do you see now?"

"I see the crinkly mud. I can't see the sky. If I shut my eyes hard, and then open them, I think the sky will return to the pool."

"Mud bottoms are good and wholesome," Enoch replied. "They do not lead astray."

"That one looks like satin, and it is crimped."

But the sky, as he had seen it that flitting moment in the pool, had been as the body of heaven for clearness.

Witchhopple Brook

“Let me take this leaf from your hair.”

It was a maple leaf that had fallen upon her as they stepped into the enchanted circle that time, “when the wind died down, and the sun came out.” A very beautiful one, yellow shading to scarlet, perfect around all its three points and edges, and glowing like polished wood.

“Thank you,” said Alison; “and now shall we find the others?”

Enoch, as he lingered behind her, folded the scarlet-shaded leaf into his pocket-book. His mouth relented from its animal calm to a quiver of longing.

CHAPTER XV

Reading Characters

ALISON and Enoch wandered to the other end of the upland. A little wind preceded them, rattling the colored leaves along in a helter-skelter game. The sun glistened warmly in the golden heart of the great beech-tree that guarded the ridge.

“ ‘ And out of it, as wind along the waste,’ ” quoted Alison.

They were nearer now the gay confusion of voices, and stood quietly in the circular yellow shadow of the beach. The heart-breaking gladness had gone, and a burden lay on Enoch's heart. This might be their last day. He would at least lose nothing by confession.

“ Miss MacDonald, do we understand each other so well that—”

He was not aware how many minutes they had stood in silence, Alison looking at the golden spattering of the beech leaves against the blue sky.

“ We can be silent together,” she finished, feeling something in his tone that required the initiative of commonplace on her part.

“ Or one can be silent while the other speaks. Will you listen while I speak?”

“ Let us both talk,” said Alison, childishly. “ It's

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such a leafy, rustly, blowy, red-and-yellow day. I want to shuffle the leaves and shout, 'Autumn in the mountains is a revel.'"

Enoch set his lips sternly while Alison rattled on.

"I could be a Mænad or one of Vedder's cypress-slender Ministers of Wine on an afternoon like this."

She pulled a low branch down with both arms upraised, till the russet foliage spread out around her like a nimbus. With skirt blown back, and hair blown out and tangled with red and yellow leaves, she seemed the spirit of gorgeous autumn. A burst of laughter floated to them across the upland.

"Ysobel Ruddle," said Alison. "Did you ever hear such a laugh, Mr. Holme? It's a peal of bells."

"She's a curious creature," Enoch replied. "But I do not want to talk of her, Miss MacDonald; I would rather ask you one question about yourself."

"Answer me one," said Alison, striving hard for a diversion. "What do you think of us all?"

"One question, but many answers."

"Take us one by one," said Alison. "We love to be analyzed." She was sure this great-browed young woodsman had opinions worth the hearing.

"Where do I begin?"

"Mrs. Ruddle?"

This would lead very well to his heart's desire, so Enoch began. His candid thoughtfulness was far removed from conventional urbanity.

"Shall I speak truthfully?"

"By all means."

"She is too fleshly for an Undine and too child-like for a worldling. She is not immoral, but unmoral."

"Good. What does she lack?"

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"The chastening of a great sorrow."

"Nixon."

"The hatchet-faced man?"

"Yes."

"Worn by satiety. Of course I have never seen his pictures, but they lack enthusiasm. He cannot rebound from flattery."

"He needs?"

"Poverty."

"Good," said Alison again, laying her cape on the slope beneath the beech-tree. They had climbed down the southeast edge of the upland, and on the sunny hill-side were screened from the rest of the party.

"How about Richard Hollister?" She gathered up some moss and crushed it between her palms.

"He is an epicurean. He would build an altar or wreck a ship with the same beautiful smile."

"What do you mean?" asked Alison, her eyes downcast, picking the shreds of moss from her lap.

"What, he is not sincere?"

"He is sincere—in the worship of the moment. Besides that, he is light-hearted and generous, as beauty-lovers are. He is a man to break hearts because he has not a heart of his own."

"Stop," cried Alison, springing to her feet. "You have no right to say these things."

"You asked me to speak the truth."

"I was foolish. I did not dream you would—you would—"

"Speak the truth? I always speak the truth, Miss MacDonald. Forgive me, I should have been silent. Will you forgive me?"

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"Yes, it was nothing. You do not know Dick Hollister."

"I spoke from ignorance," said Enoch, carefully. "I described a type. Will you not sit down? You are not going?"

Alison looked hesitatingly towards the upland. The picnickers had scattered, and there was no sound of voices. The reminiscent quiet spell of September lay on the atmosphere. The wind had gone down.

"There is one person more I would like to talk about," said Enoch, with azure in his eyes, "and I shall not speak from ignorance and I will not be unkind."

"Listen to those children," cried Alison, as laughter drifted to them from the woods. "They have found something amusing. Let us join them."

"Must you always be amused?" asked Enoch.

He was stung by Alison's impersonal chatter. In some vague way he knew that she had a purpose, and yet it impelled him all the more to the confession that she warded away. To some temperaments a danger sign is an irresistible lure.

"Why not be amused?" asked Alison. "Give me gayety or give me death."

"You, too," said Enoch, with persistent gravity. "Are you like the others, butterflies drifting down the painted ways, while the great tragic world suffers and lives and dies and God's purposes are worked out to everlasting happiness or misery? Is there nothing to life but what you and your friends make of it, a children's holiday? Have you not seen in your city—cannot you see even here, in the mountains—men and women, toiling, struggling, starved, hideous lives, without the comfort of hope or of

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memory to make the happiness possible that you recklessly squander?"

In quick panorama there passed before Enoch the exotic luxury of Camp Hollister, with its servants, iced drinks, awnings, fantastic mummeries, and, in contrast, the log shanties, the long, freezing winters of lumber-camps on the mountain, men standing to their waists in ice, knocked to death by treacherous booms. At that moment, Alison, parrying his earnestness, seemed to embody the heartless indifference of one half the world to the other. The blind agony of one who is refused hearing sought brutal outlet. He was always most cruel when he most deeply loved.

He knew that in a moment he would be overcome by remorse and tenderness. Till then he spurred himself on to pour out his wounded heart. If the girl refused to listen to his love, she should listen to his scorn.

"You know what I have to say and you will not hear me," he said.

The paleness of his face and the lines about his hurt eyes was painful to see. Alison had dropped her arms to her side, and stood watching him with surprise and pity.

"You will not listen to me, and why? It pleases your fancy to draw out my wood-lore and learn of the logging camps, the river drives, the skidding, and sawing. It is picturesque—a story-book. You turn the leaves with a smile. But once let me speak to you as human to human, you shut the book in disgust. You draw away from the touch of my earth-stained fingers. The luxury you have known is the only bar between us, and you hold yourself apart

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like a different clay. My God, we are different. What do we know of you or you of us?"

The long isolation of Enoch's life was subjective as well as objective. It thrust itself like a visible wall between him and fellow-feeling.

"The crackling of thorns under a pot, and I have said all there is to say of you."

Alison's trembling hands smote him like a prayer. He steadied himself against a tree, covering his face. What had he said? What would she say? Did she know he loved her? My God, how he loved her!

"Mr. Holme."

He turned towards her.

"I will leave you," he said. "I have—"

(No, she should never know the mad thought of his heart.)

"—been very rude—"

(Yes, he would make his confession, quite humbly, with no thought of her answer.)

"I had meant to say that—"

("I loved you." This was never the time. How still she stands there.)

"That I was—glad to know you."

("Good God, that I had never seen her.")

"I am a plain man, unlearned in your ways."

(He knows by heart those hands and the tendrils round her neck.)

"Will you forgive me?"

("I love you, I love you, I love you.")

"—and forget my rough words?"

(They are gashed in his memory like axe-marks.)

"No, no," said Alison, filled with great pity for the man's suffering. "I understand what you had in your heart to say. You need not be sorry that you

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have spoken as you did. I believe in you, Mr. Holme, and want you to understand us. Sit down here and listen to me a little."

She sat at the foot of the beech-tree among the crumpled leaves, but Enoch remained standing.

"Epicureans, Undines, reckless idlers who have never known care—do we seem so? Mr. Holme, of all whom you met at the camp that afternoon there is scarcely one who does not know trouble, scarcely one on whose heart there is not a burden. We dissemble before the world, before each other."

"If you have never known the hopeless pang of poverty, what it is to be tied like a bear to a trap, pawing for freedom, but poverty like a steel vise fastening you to one spot—"

"Poverty," said Alison, slowly. "I have been through in my mind all that poverty means for—myself and for Mary. My father, dying, left us unprovided for. When I became Mr. Hollister's secretary, I became a bread-winner, Mr. Holme."

"Bread-winner?"

"You think it merely a fanciful name for charity," Alison smiled with insight. "Even charity is a difficult thought, is it not? But to leave myself out of the question, poverty is not far removed from any one. People are not ignorant of it as they seem. If one has never known what it is to question whence comes the next dollar, one's parents can tell one, or one's intimate friend. Rub off the veneer of a few years of luxury, of idleness, the polish of a little education and travel, we are all the same. Yours is too large a spirit to be embittered by class."

("Woman, woman, do you not know that it was the bitterness of barren love that maddened me?")

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Alison's kind voice went on:

"Mrs. Ruddle, for instance, with her daring gayety and reckless speeches—you would understand her better, Mr. Holme, if you knew what her life had been. We, who know her, forgive a great deal, thinking how bravely, after all, she has tussled with bitterness from her childhood till this very day. She has never had a home. Her father was a dissolute ne'er-do-well, who sent his wife to the grave broken-hearted before Ysobel could read her primer. She was packed off to school at Paris, Geneva, Brussels, here, there, everywhere, to suit the father's fancy, to keep her out of his way. When barely out of school she married the man who was her husband. And there was another tragedy."

The pause in Alison's voice was vibrant with pathos.

"Poor Ysobel! She thinks she is armor-proof against the world. She has known more evil than good. What wonder that her philosophy of life leaves out the soul? You said she needed the chastening of great sorrow. Perhaps you were right, for there are some natures whom sorrow does not chasten. A great happiness might chasten as well. And Nixie has been poor all his life, not petted and not praised. He worked his way through the art schools, getting up at gray of morning to put out street lamps, and setting type till midnight. Even now, with his name before the public, it's a hand-to-mouth struggle for daily bread. That careless indifference of his is the armor of a sensitive nature against misunderstanding and ridicule."

Enoch listened, growing sane again. This straightforward girl, with the exquisite voice and the

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knowledge of life in her eyes, astonished him. She had helped him to master himself. Oh, for an opportunity to serve her and to win her.

"Miss MacDonald," he faltered, "you have taught me a lesson. But you, you with everything to shield you, every one to love you—"

He stopped, not knowing how to frame the question that was in his mind. Alison understood.

"Look at me. Do I look like a woman who has never suffered?"

It was rarely that Alison alluded to the grief of her own life. She had a desire that Enoch should understand her. She clearly felt that he had come to a crisis in his life. She knew he had done himself injustice. She wanted to bring about a fellowship between them by making him sharer of her experience. She trusted him. She wanted him to trust himself.

Enoch looked at her in a new way, not as the white-clad dreamer of the moonlight drive, nor the quaint mummer of the Breton tea, nor the demure horsewoman of Lost Inn, but a woman to whom he had uttered insanity and who asked him now to read her life in her face. Her superb belief in him was thrilling.

He looked at her long and deeply. The angel of knowledge was in her eyes. As he looked thus, memory swept like a wave over Alison's face. The grief that for his sake she called up engulfed her. She wondered how she could ever again forget.

"I am cruel, cruel," said Enoch, leaning over her. "Do not think of it."

"I want you to know. Think, if you can, of a home as happy as love could make it. Think of a

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man idolized by his family, his friends, my ideal, Mr. Holme, of husband, father, friend. He was the centre of that home, the head of that household. My mother lived for him. I adored him."

Alison's expressive hands, moving as she talked, now, as she was silent, seemed by a little gesture to show the circle about the fireside.

"Do you know what a panic in Wall Street is? Millions of money lost and — gained somewhere, men's lives wrecked, always human lives at the bottom, upset like this, lights out, and broken chimneys."

Alison's unconscious fingers showed a life upset like a lamp from a table and a ring of faces aghast.

"I can see my father now as he lay across the sofa in the firelight, the powder mark on his temple, and the pistol dropped from his hand to the floor. Oh, my father."

Alison's hands opened and closed.

"When I shut my ears to the sound of the world and my eyes to familiar faces, I hear the scream of my maddened mother. I can see that face of hers, darkening to insanity. I feel sometimes that I too must go mad as she did. No, no; let me tell you. It is good for me to think of them once more. They will not be ironed out of my life. My father, my mother. He lies across the sofa with the gray mark on his temple. She rocks and rocks and rocks in that place—you know—where they take the people whose windows are darkened."

Alison's never quiet fingers showed the hideous monotony of the rocker. "I have never been able to look at a rocking-chair since."

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"God has helped you to bear these things," said Enoch. "God has wrought sorrow into fine gold."

Alison poured a liquid look upon him. Her folded hands expressed peace of mastery.

"I do not know what you mean by God. I have borne it because I am young and strong, and because Mary is left to me, and because—green grass grows over graves."

"Dear Miss MacDonald, do you not know Christ? Is He not a friend to you? If you only let Him speak to you—"

"I have heard such language, but I cannot understand it. God and Christ are vague terms of theology. Human love is real. I have one thing more to tell you. Then you will understand better—what you did not understand a while ago."

Enoch was himself again, his nobler self. His blue eyes were large with compassion for this brave heart who fought alone, unknowing Christ, against such odds. His humaner passion, in its brutal crudeness, was mastered by Alison's rare gift, an essentially womanly quality of bringing out one's best. A diviner passion for souls took its place.

"I am engaged to Richard Hollister. We are to be married in October."

"Good God!" cried Enoch. The human passion rudely usurped the place of the divine. He walked away from Alison down the slope. He saw nothing. He thought nothing. He suffered. He lived. He returned to Alison an older man.

"Our lives have come closely together," cried Alison. "You have deeply impressed me. I believe in you, Mr. Holme. I believe you will do great things."

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How like she was talking to the woman of his fancy and how unlike.

“Not without you.”

Enoch's voice was controlled, but heavy with meaning.

“Then with me,” said Alison, looking at him clearly. “With me, if you will have us friends. Friends, Mr. Holme?”

She held out her hand to him. Enoch's steel-gray eyes grew large and blue with forecast of the future.

“Friends,” he replied, gravely, with a leap at the heart, as he took her hand in his.

CHAPTER XVI

An Interruption

THERE had been for some time stirring in the dense growth of young cedar below them on the slope such delicate agitations as one hears from bird-haunted hedges, or squirrel-habited oaks, or the dim under-life of earth beneath leaf mould. Enoch and Alison had both apprehended it by the dull physical sense, but to the finer hearing it had not yet come. When silence fell between them, the cedar-trees were still, for the afternoon was windless. But they both heard the stirring, arriving late on their sense, like a rising-bell struck in one's sleep and heard on waking.

Then Loiseau flung himself out of the shadows. "Aye, look, look yer fill. When ye've finished lookin', ye philanderin' preacher ye, ye that don't hev the spirrit to in with yer kind as drinks good-fellowship an' talk to each other like men, but walks on eggs an' holds your hands up in holy horror at folks that are human, what time ye ben't throwin' stones into other people's houses, ye—Enoch Holme!"

Loiseau spit out the name like an abusive epithet.

"Tell me, ef ye can, while ye're havin' your feast, eye-gazin' and hand-holdin', whar's that little sister of yours, you that purtends she be the apple of your

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eye and then whisks her off to be a toy for rich men's sons while ye puts yer own oar in with the daughters. Blind fool that ye be, tell me whar Sararose is this minute, an' if you cyant tell me, I cyan, by hell."

Loiseau poured this out, without a stop, finishing with an oath. He was black with passion. Enoch turned to Alison.

"Miss MacDonald, I will take you to your friends."

"Oh no, not so quick, damn you. 'Twas you that kep' her from keepin' her promise with me, an' 'tis you that shall answer for it now. Parlay-vouin' and chassayin' ain't goin' to cyount between you and me. Drop yer fine airs, Enoch Holme, and step up to business."

"Loiseau, you're mad—"

"Mad am I, and perhaps 'twould madden you if ye had a heart in ye in place of a lump of sanctified ice, to see the little gell ye loved cyarried off by thet silk-stockinged dude of a Hollister, he a whisperin' an' smilin' and cyarin' no more fer her than fer the speckled trout he pulls out o' the stream, and I—Lord help me—"

There was murder and insanity in Loiseau's eye, and an ugly flash in the air as he sprang at Enoch.

"Save yourself," cried Enoch, for Alison was behind him. He caught Loiseau's wrist in his iron grasp and twisted it upward. The knife pointed skyward from the impotent fingers.

"Drop it."

It fell to the ground.

"That would have been a pity," said Enoch.

"Damn you," said Loiseau.

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"Out of respect to the lady," said Enoch, "you will not swear again."

"Let me go," snarled Loiseau, jerking like a trapped animal.

Enoch released his hold, but transfixed Loiseau with a look.

"Listen to me."

Loiseau was cowed by the fallen knife between them.

"There is no quarrel between us, Loiseau. Sara rose, not I, promised you. If I had known it, she should not have gone. As for what further has happened to-day, say no more of it. You are excited. We will both forget it."

Enoch stooped down and stuck the knife-blade into the ground.

"Go home," he said, raising himself.

Again that look passed between them. Enoch conquered.

"Where is your boat?" as if in answer to Loiseau's submission.

"Down by the bend."

Loiseau turned sullenly on his heel, and disappeared in the shadows whence he had come.

"I am so sorry, Miss MacDonald, so sorry."

"What a terrible face."

"He has been drinking and did not know what he was about."

"And he really loves your sister?"

"You see of what sort we are in these mountains," Enoch answered, a little bitterly.

"What did he mean about Richard Hollister?"

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you. He was wild.

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He did his best to rouse me. Do you know, I believe he hates me more than he loves Sararose."

"Why, Mr. Holme?"

"I do not know. Many people hate me, and yet there is not one of them for whom I would not do much."

"They don't understand you," said Alison, quietly.

They regained the upland, and were hailed at a distance by some of their party.

"I wonder," said Alison, "that you do not think well of Mr. Mayhew's project for you in New York. The theological school would open such a great field."

"I am beginning to think better of it. And if I could have Sararose in New York also, I would be glad to give Sararose opportunity."

"Let me help you place her somewhere if you come. She has such a charming voice, and she is musical to her very finger-tips."

Alison, after the disagreeable episode, recovered her spirits in planning for Enoch and Sararose a rose-colored future.

CHAPTER XVII

Down - Stream

"Sit still, sit very, very still."

"And what shall I see?"

"Listen."

"What is it?"

"Do you hear that puff-puff?"

"Yes."

"Now, do you see?"

"Where?"

"Listen."

Pluff, pluff, whisk, whisk, crkle, crkle in the brown curly duff, and the ecstatic whispers of the two under the basswood dropped to breathlessness. The little bull's-eye camera was on the man's knee, cocked and primed for assault. The girl sat frozen to her first shy attitude, a hand on Richard's sleeve, head bent towards him like sunflower's expectancy. The little partridges, bronzy, fluffy, unconscious, gabbled onward, scattering away from the capacious-breasted, roving-eyed mother, rocking to the rearward of them.

"Shall I?" asked Richard, with muscular arm-hint, understood by Sararose's fingers.

"Very slowly, smoothly—"

Richard's hand crept out towards the lever, as

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slow and smooth as the sliding of a cloud. The young partridges nibbled appreciatively over a rich find of ground-berry. Some quick, subtle instinct thrilled them to pungent dread. Their round, gleaming eyes apprehended the first experience of man.

The shutter snapped under Richard's finger, and, so immediate, was almost simultaneous. Mother Partridge whirled noisily upward. The well-trained progeny obliterated themselves in moveless simulation of leaf, stump, knoll.

"Hallelujah, 'tis done," cried Richard, pulling Sararose to her feet along with him. "I should have gone mad to keep still a moment longer. Where are they all, Sararose?"

"There, but you can't see them."

"Clever little pieces. Lying low, eh? I never understood it so well before, lying low!"

"You will send me one of the pictures?"

Richard gave the careless acquiescence of a camera owner.

"I wonder what the others have been doing. Whatever it is, Mrs. Ruddie is sure to have come in winner. We shall get a deer as we canoe home, don't you think?"

Sararose hoped she might share a canoe with Richard. He had such a fascinating way of asking her advice while he petted her with his eyes.

"Oh yes. The does will go down to the runway to feed, and you will wear the little light in your cap, and they will stand still to look."

"A new way of jacking," said Richard. "Bang, bang, goes our flash-light, and splash, splash, goes the deer, and we have not murdered anything. We keep the pictures for our pains, and Madame Doe

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has the experience. Dashed if I ever enjoyed marking down a mother beside her fawns."

Richard planned to get Alison for the quiet downstream in the crisp September starlight. He quite forgot the little country girl whose head swam with vari-colored ambitions. So do we walk in life, side by side, apparently comrades, verily at cross purposes that defy each other.

Not being of an analytic mind, he could not have told what it was in Alison that he loved. The woman of her, animal and spiritual, appealed to the man of him. She was all curve, no angle. She seemed to enfold you with her voice, her eyes, and he was used to her. Such unthinking lovership had best beware surprises, the storming of the heart by a fresh experience bursting on one like shrapnel-shell in the darkness, an onset from which there is no retreat.

Alison had often told herself why she loved Richard, the careless, sure chivalry of him, the unreckoning generosity, the loyal comradeship, all that is summed up in the despised epithet good-heartedness. Coupled with a winning smile and a brave mien, good-heartedness casts off its homely weeds and becomes, instead of plain Guyon, Orlando of the sword, or Bayard with the knee-buckles flashing.

"Little sweetheart," said Alison, crushing Mary in her arms, a bunch of crumpled sun-bonnet, tangly curls, and tiredness. "Have you had a good time?"

Mary cuddled into the curve of Alison's arms, and rested her flushed little face on the loving shoulder in a way that bespoke not of company caresses.

"I have sawn evlyzing," she cried, "and evlyzing was nice. And will you tell me a stoly, Alison?"

Alison held her in her lap, smoothing her curls

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and kissing her dimples, and, in fact, loving her so lavishly that Enoch, on the shore, loading the boats and pushing off the fleet one by one, felt like a starved man serving at a feast. Richard stood by, hands in his pockets, smiling down on the two of them.

"What are you doing, Dick?"

Olive cheek and black hair against Mary's rose-leaf and bronze color, she looked up at him. Her wood-colored covert cloth, man-tailored and severe, clinging to the swell of her bosom and the rich curves of her limbs, emphasized the woman of her caressing attitude.

"I'm waiting for the crumbs, Alison."

He bent over, made bold by the gathering twilight, and snatched a kiss from the soft triangle below the tip of her ear.

"I have been waiting for you all day," he murmured. "We will go home together."

Enoch, suddenly returning for the camera left on the shore, became unwilling witness of this little passage. The muscles stiffened about his mouth. He wore the look of a man who has swallowed bitter medicine.

"Now the stoly," fluted Mary, sitting between Alison's feet as they pushed off in the twilight. The cool leaf-burdened scent of autumn evening brushed their senses. It carried the first faint suggestion of remote snow, mingled with memory of harvest moons. A little pale-stepping frost began to silver the fallen leaves. Alison wrapped a rug around Mary, saying:

"A story, Mary? Tell me one, of what you have seen to-day."

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"Once upon a time is lublier yan to-day," philosophized Mary. "And your stolies are such velly lubly stolies, Alison."

"What shall it be, sweetheart?"

"Dlagons and witches and littly boys zat get all losted."

The child's creative fancy kindled dramatic tenderness in her voice.

Enoch, noiselessly stroking behind them with his sister and June Hollister, heard every word of the pretty duet. It struck to his heart like a love-potion. As the twilight gathers down and stars tremble forth, one's ears are attuned more delicately than at other hours, and sound becomes like heard color or dreamed-of taste, something rare, remote.

"You will help me with the story, Mary?"

"I want a littly boy who lives in a glate big woods. Zen a witch lady who steals him away. Now, Alison, tell me."

"There was a little boy," said Alison, in an interesting initiatory manner, "who lived in the great big woods."

There were nods of satisfaction from the small girl on the hemlock boughs. Alison, bending towards Richard over the little head, exchanged a smile over the innocence of her story listener.

"You artful Scheherazade," murmured Richard, letting his paddle rest across the gunwales while he stripped himself of his coat.

"Now is ze time for ze witch lady."

"Then down from the hill-top strode a witch," said Alison, melodramatically.

"Up from the city floated a witch," said Enoch, at his paddle.

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"Zat is 'zackly ze way."

"She wore a black pointed cap, with two tails hanging down behind."

This was a daring stroke that met with instant success.

"Did she?" excitedly; "and a bloomstick?"

"A broomstick walking along by itself and behind her ten black cats."

"Oh," ecstatically. "And now is ze time for ze littly boy to be losted away."

"He loses himself and follows her," said Enoch, at his paddle.

"You know how, Alison," patronizingly. "Zat was splendid about ze cats," in a burst of reminiscent admiration.

"Listen," said Richard. "Do you hear that roaring?"

He let the canoe drift slowly down-stream past the ghostly alder-woods and water-maples. The sky was all tints of melted green, and the stars shone wet, as if seen through tears.

"It sounds like the Elder River," Alison said, "but it can't be."

"It is," Enoch replied, who was close behind them; "Lone Falls on the Elder River, a quarter-mile away, as the bird flies, across this strip of woodland."

"Ah, these mountains!" exclaimed Alison, bewildered. "These winding streams! Your knowledge is a miracle. What do you go by?"

"One must be born to them," Enoch replied.

"Now I should have said that Elder River was off there to the west."

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"So it is," laughed Richard. "Both east and west of us, isn't it, Holme?"

"It crosses my land three times," said Enoch, "in as many different directions."

"Why did the littly boy follow ze witch lady?" interpolated Mary, lifting a small face to Alison's.

While Alison continued the tale, Enoch, listening to the fairy roaring of the invisible river, could not but think of the moonlight night, so long ago, a lifetime ago it seemed, and the foolish hopes that had curved their rainbows over his heart and faded away again into night. Exquisite apparitions of light and color, like the gauzy miraculous circle that had bound him and Alison together at Lost Inn that unforgettable afternoon. Well, it was something to have stood once within a rainbow by the one woman's side.

"Where shall he go, Mary?"

"To ze witch lady's house."

"How far?"

"'Bout free miles."

"They whisked him off to the witch's house, about three miles away, a dark, gloomy house, with blinds fast closed."

"Ah, but you are wrong," said Enoch. "The witch lady's house was set on a hill and was full of windows, and the light poured into them till they shone like the sun."

"The little boy entered and sat down in a chair. The broomstick trotted off behind the door, and the ten cats lay down by the fire-place."

"Now ze witch lady gives him somezing to eat. Hollid, you know. And what was in it—flogs' eyes?"

Down-Stream

"She gave him some pudding, horrid, with frogs' eyes in it."

A sigh of sympathetic disgust came from the bottom of the boat.

"Black as zat hole in ze tleess?" Mary pointed to the shuddering shore.

"Blacker, but, as it happened, the witch went upstairs—"

"Weak point," interpolated Richard, "such confiding innocence on her part."

"While ze witch lady is gone," said the inventive listener, with foresight, "he can put ze pudding in his pottit, unless it was soft pudding."

Mary had full confidence in the story-teller, but the possibilities of custard-pudding in one's pocket were staggering. "Now he must tly to get away, ze poor littly boy."

"But the witch came back and caught him by the hair."

"Oh," Mary cooed, sympathetically. "Now he must be putted in ze dark closet."

"She put him in a closet up-stairs."

"It would be better to have it down-stairs."

"I was mistaken; it was down-stairs."

"Anything in it?"

"Nothing."

"Not a chair?"

"No."

"Nor á hook?"

"No."

"Tould he tu'n r'ound?"

"No."

"Tould he lean against the wall?"

"He could."

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"Ah!" came Mary's voice of relief.

"And that is the first chapter, Mary. We will leave him in the closet."

"It is a lubly stoly," breathed Mary, patting Alison's knee. "May I ax you some questions?"

"Yes."

"What did ze witch lady do when she went upstairs?"

"She talked with her owl."

"Oh, did she have an owl?"

"Yes; it sat on the head of her bed, on the right-hand post."

"It would have been a littly bit nicer," mused Mary, delicately, "to have had two, one for each post." Mary had an eye for symmetry.

"The facts of the case were," Alison doggedly returned, "that there was only one owl."

"Had zere always been only one?"

Here was a chance for concession. "There had been two, but the cats ate one owl."

"Oh!"

Mary's voice was sleepy, but satisfied.

Richard sent the boat ahead with long, smooth hisses. The water plashed comfortably against the thin keel. The trees chipped darkness, and the purple heights were pricked with hesitant starlight.

"Holme, Holme."

A voice assailed the night. Nixon had pulled up by the shore, and he and Ysobel clung to the deer-grass till Enoch should come in sight.

"You've lost your way, Nixie," said Ysobel, solemnly. "You can't manage Mallarmé and an Adirondack skiff together."

Down-Stream

"Mallarmé," growled the painter. "It was my own."

"Equally pernicious. And now we're side-tracked in the wilderness at an unearthly hour, and my youth and morals will be corrupted, *mon Dieu!*"

There was calling, and handkerchief waving, and fumbling for matches, sputterings, and extinguishments, but finally Ysobel waved the lighted lantern, and the dim shadows resolved themselves to canoe-shapes and were localized by answering voices. The *Tippy Canoe* and the *Happy Home* touched sides with the *Me and Her* in its moorings among the rushes.

"Certainly," said Enoch, "you would have gone astray in here. This is an inlet that runs a mile or two in a cranberry-bog. Where are the Hollisters?"

"They turned in here fifteen minutes ago, didn't they, Ysobel? You remember they called to us."

"And you wouldn't let me answer them, you Nixie. Was it Verlaine or Nixonese that you stopped my mouth withal?"

"They are grounded by this time, then," remarked Enoch, dryly.

Mary roused herself at this exciting moment of stoppage.

"Have we come to ze witch lady's house, Alison? Was ze witch a pretty lady? Do there be beyutiful witch ladies?"

"This witch was beautiful," Enoch took it upon himself to answer, as Mary's demands were neglected in the general confusion.

June and Sararose, at his suggestion, disposed themselves respectively in the *Happy Home* and the *Me and Her*, while Enoch stripped himself of his

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shoes and stockings, rolled up his trousers, and, armed with paddle and iron-tipped punting-pole, started off in the *Tippy Canoe*.

"It's simply a question of dragging the boat," he said, in answer to June's question. "Wading and pulling get a boat up the shallows the quickest."

He shot out of sight in the darkness, while June shivered at the thought of a plunge in cold water, and Sararose wondered at one of Mrs. Ruddell's low-toned speeches that made the dust-colored man laugh so gloatingly. Little Mary, still hugging closely her picture of a "beyutiful" lady with shiny eyes, was tucked away in the stern with an extra rug, and soon fell into blissful sleep. Richard sat in the bow, his knees close to Alison's, and facing her. The paddles, stuck in the bottom, kept the boats inshore and together.

"Alison," was all he said, laying his hand in her lap. She put her hand over his and they sat quiet.

Ysobel, Nixon, and June talked idly at intervals, listlessly, as befits a homeward voyage. Sararose, shivering a little and lonely, was conscious of currents of life about her of which she was not a part and which she did not comprehend. Enoch returned with the wanderers, and they again set off downstream under the stars.

"Turn always to the left," said he, as he paddled out in advance, Richard close following, "and you come to the lake in twenty minutes. The rapids are easily managed. Lift your paddles, and you're carried over like a feather."

"No danger at all," said the painter, mock-soothingly to Ysobel, who was the daringest spirit at

Down-Stream

camp, "unless you do a Concarneau gavotte in the skiff—"

"And you fight shy of ballades," said Ysobel, lighting her cigarette at his pipe, "especially in Nixonese."

Enoch's boat and Richard's slid end to end on a loop of the stream. Enoch lifted his paddle and caught the boat rim of the *Happy Home*, letting the two skiffs drift together down-stream. He leaned across and spoke to Alison, as if she alone were there.

"We will turn to the right and let the others go by. When it is quiet we will paddle in perfect silence and watch the deer. There's a famous runway a bit farther down."

He fastened the little lantern to Alison's cap, and their eyes met.

"You have your camera? And the picture shall be yours—yours."

The word beat upon her ear like something of great import.

"And if the deer should not come?" he thought, as he pushed his boat, with velvet blade severing the water. They paused and waited, Alison's headlight streaking out in wavy red, while the canoes behind lay inkily blended with night.

An antlered forehead and two shining eyes. Another beautiful forehead, another pair of wondering eyes. The light boats rose and fell with the breath of suspense. The foreheads and the eyes at the end of the wavy red path were framed in ebony branches that dipped to the water.

"Not yet," thrilled Enoch. "They are curious. They will come nearer."

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The slow-splashing legs sent out wavelets in widening circles.

"Now! While they are but knee-deep in the shallows."

There was white sheet of flame and a quick explosion. The picture was taken. The deer disappeared in the underbrush. Alison clapped her hands softly.

"The curtain's gone down. Let's go home," yawned June.

"It is your picture as well," said Alison, leaning to Enoch before the boats separated.

"Mine and yours, then."

"What color were ze witch lady's eyes?" said a little voice, awaking from the pillows of the stern.

"The color of night, sweetheart," Alison answered, in the matter-of-fact way that amused Richard.

"And when she smiled little stars came out in them," added Enoch.

"Zey were zackly ze color of yours, Alison. Zat was sort of funny, wasn't it, Alison?"

CHAPTER XVIII

The Social at Si's

SI NEWCOME's best room was a large, square apartment, redolent of gloom and state, that opened off the sunny, well-scrubbed kitchen. In the kitchen was the big, cheerful range, where in the spring-time vats of sap were wont to simmer for the sugaring-off parties. Kettles of soft-soap spread abroad their steamy, unctuous odors, and on winter mornings the hot lard hissed about the curling rings of doughnuts that blushed to a rosy brown in the angry depths. In an alcove stood the deep-quilted bed where Granny Newcome slept, and on which, at social functions, red-necked swains sat in a grinning row, "horsing" each other to relieve their embarrassment. In the best room hung a choice assortment of pictures, a haven for the eyes of bashful girls when in the agony of an introduction.

There was a lithograph of a robin clasping a log fence, his head distressfully heaven-gazing, with all the traditional meek virtue of his tribe in the tilt of his fat neck. Much admired also at critical moments was a colored print of Sunnyside, a snowy villa above a torquoise-blue Hudson, whose broad expanse was well decorated with sails. There was emerald grass, a winding ochre road, bottle-green ro-

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tundities of trees casting splendidly solid circumference of shade, and Irving himself, reading on a rustic bench, with a hound respectfully watching, and a round-hatted gardener pushing an antiquated machine across the green lawn.

These two works of art had been given as school prizes in the days of Granny Newcome's youth.

At half-past seven folks began to arrive, and were marched relentlessly through the warm enticements of the kitchen to the arctic splendors of the carpeted room. It was understood that the Hollisters and Miss MacDonald were coming, and this shed an extra gloom over the opening ceremonies.

"They say she's awfully nice, just as common as anybody," whispered Nance Hartle to Zuba Spriggs.

"Why shouldn't she?" answered Zuba, aloud.

A meek old woman glanced in astonishment towards the voluble corner. People who would speak out, "fust off," at a social awakened her resentful awe.

"She hez to work just like folks, they say," continued Zuba. "She clerks for Colonel Hollister, I've hearn tell."

"Come over here, Mame," as young Mrs. Kitripp, from Saranae, entered the room, stiffly escorted by Mrs. Newcome, who always did the honors authoritatively.

Mame Kitripp was not allowed to heed this insinuating request, however, for the hair-cloth arm-chair next Mrs. Gene Lawless was destined for her by the hostess, who drew sharp lines between maid and matron, and treated her guests like pieces in an immovable game. Mame sank resignedly between the

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slippery arms and shot a smiling glance towards her old-time chums.

Two or three husbands followed their wives into the room and took their assigned places with sheepish smiles.

A burst of masculine voices, along with a whiff of cold air, came from the entry.

"There's the boys; they do beat all," remarked Zuba to Nance, with a chuckle of anticipation.

There was evidently some playful altercation between the masterful hostess and the "boys," which culminated in:

"Shack right along, boys, and talk to the gals. They be in the parlor."

The girls waited with drawn breath, but in vain.

"They're sitting on Granny's bed, I do declare," announced Mame, craning her neck around the door.

The parlor relapsed into dull despair, which was soon broken in upon by the entrance of Eli Barhite's wife. She was one of those women who burst like a bomb into the camp of lethargy.

Her huge, jelly-like figure seemed the centre and source of jollity, her little, sparkling eyes, and loose, large laugh set on fire the combustible mirth of every gathering.

Mrs. Barhite threw her hat and shawl across the room into Zuba's lap.

"Ain't she the greatest? She don't cyare about nothin'," said the meek woman.

"Take them and keep ye warm till the boys come in," shouted Mrs. Barhite. "You gals look like picked chickens in a fence corner."

Mrs. Barhite, by way of a practical joke, plumped herself into a very small and feeble chair.

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"Where you goin' to set, Eli? Looks like there ain't no room for a big man in here!"

Eli Barhite, spindle-legged, with a semicircular black mustache trimming his gaunt face, looked nervously about, expecting the guffaw that would greet this sally. He wore the bitter humility of the masculine object of conjugal wit. He was one of the chief "setters" at Eddie's, and always to be counted on for a game of cards in the back room.

The parlor began to bristle with jocose advice to Eli, and the ice was broken. Mrs. Barhite got up and moved ponderously about the room, bestowing a joke here and a nudge there, till she reached the doorway, and espied the young men in the kitchen. She roared with simulated indignation and contempt.

"Haw! haw! if you don't look like you was glued there, stuffed crows on a snow-bank. I'll be blowed! Come in here and spark with them girls in the corner. You're a husky bunch. Come along!"

The masculine phalanx transferred itself to its proper environment, and, amid general merriment, the people gathered into congenial groups. The friend of humanity hobnobbed with Mrs. Newcome in the kitchen over the subject of the evening's refreshments.

"She puts me in mind of one of them dynamite fuses," said Spriggs, reflectively. "We be a log-jam, durned logs all laying quiet, and she starts the jam like thet, crack out o' the box."

"Ah, go along!" came an unexpected rejoinder from the kitchen. "A dynamite fuse is a mighty little thing."

"These be giant fuses," said Eli, cynically, em-

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boldened by the intervention of a wall between himself and the voice.

"Thet's all right—I'll *giant* you!" responded Mrs. Eli, with nimble repartee, appreciated even by Granny in the stove corner, whose withered chin shook in the recesses of her frilled neckerchief.

"Come right in, Colonel Hollister. Miz Hollister, let me take your shawl. How be you, Miss Alison?" Mrs. Newcome's metallic greetings heralded the arrival of the camp folks.

"We've come all in a bunch," said Alison.

"Quite an invasion," added Mrs. Hollister, whose vocabulary was sure to introduce the note of difference that made country people draw in their skirts suspiciously. "You know my son, Richard."

"Awfully glad to be here, Mrs. Newcome," said Richard's hearty, mellow voice. "I met your daughter, Miss Maybelle, at the party last July."

Richard had been primed beforehand by Alison.

"Step up, Miss Maybelle," commanded the mother, confused into bestowing this title by young Hollister's affability.

A tall girl in a tight red waist came out of the pantry, and wiped her floury hands on the roller-towel before shaking hands with Hollister. He saw at once that he never would have remembered her, a lapse of memory which gave his manner an added shade of cordiality.

"Don't bother about us," said Alison, who saw that Mrs. Newcome was in the midst of culinary preparation. "We'll just go into the parlor and—"

"You have such a cosey kitchen, I want to sit right down here and visit with you," purred Mrs. Hollister, effusively. In her endeavors to set people

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at their ease she leaped over the natural barriers like an impetuous army, but Mrs. Newcome manned her bulwarks stoutly.

"Come with me and I'll make you acquainted." Mrs. Newcome's eagle eye pointed the way to the parlor.

Colonel Hollister, who had a knack of fitting in comfortably with any surroundings, had already joined the majority, and was discussing causes of dry rot in timber with the elder Loiseau. Mrs. Newcome went through the round of introductions with vigorous celerity.

"I'm stirring the eggs straight into this batter," called Eli's wife from the kitchen, in the fateful tone of one announcing a catastrophe.

"And Miz Spriggs, Miz Hollister," finished Mrs. Newcome, briskly, making her exit.

The social was a more than ordinarily significant affair, cementing as it did the final reconciliation of the Loiseaus and the Newcomes. Only old Si held out with all the obduracy of the very aged, and had retired for the evening to the woodshed, where he warmed his hands by a cracked and rusty stove. Later in the evening, when the fun waxed fast and furious, and "borrow and lend" alternated feverishly with "Pop goes the weasel," various young men sought the woodshed's retirement, somewhat, as amid other surroundings, young men seek a moment's relaxation from the ball in the freedom of the smoking-room or the coolness of the conservatory. Old Si, smoothing his stubbly white goatee with blue, bent fingers, regaled the young men with bitter recollections on his daughter-in-law's foolishness and with confidences concerning his own unhappy lot as hewer

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of wood and drawer of water in the place where he had once been lord of the manor.

"There hain't a Hartle come yet, be there?" grinned the cynical old man at the two woodshed visitors.

"Yaas, Nance Hartle, a good spell back."

"She's awfully taken up with Ezra's oldest boy, so she'd come, whether or no. There wasn't never no sperrit abaout Nance's mother's folks. They was kin to the Charbonneaus, and every last shaver of a Charbonneau 'ud lick the boots of anybody as 'ud stop to let him. Loiseau come?"

"Not yet."

"Nor won't till kingdom come. Ef Enoch Holme's got horse sense, he's sense enough to know that what folks says in meetin' they eats at leisure. Lord-forgive-'ems comes an off-sight slicker than howdy-dos. You won't see no damn Loiseau shake with no Newcome this night, or my name ain't Si Newcome. How? What's that?"

"Somebody coming in."

Old Si peered out of the woodshed door into the covered passage that connected with the kitchen. By this modest entrance a group of people passed whom old Si, the back of his hand held to his mouth, designated to the young men by the cracked stove as "Holme's folks."

"And Tyke Loiseau at end of the string," remarked old Si, as the kitchen door opened and let a flood of lamplight on the backs of the new-comers.

He spit contemptuously into his hands, and rubbed his two palms together as if he were still chopping wood.

"There's a wumman at the bottom of it, allus a

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wumman," he growled, unaware that he was speaking to himself, the two young men having hastened away to witness the clashing of the clans, for of all concerned in the feud none had been so bitter as young Si's wife and Tyke Loiseau.

"It's Holme's gal as brings him along," remarked the old man by his stove. "He'd be stiffer then a stick of frozen spruce if 'twarn't for that gal. Allus a wumman."

Old Si hugged to himself the consciousness of unabating resolution, and tried to shut his senses from the delightful odor of fried cakes and syrup that floated through the chinks into his self-chosen cell.

Mrs. Newcome stood at the stove, one energetic hand on her hip, the other holding the cake-turner above the griddle, where the buckwheat-cakes had begun to bubble and rise almost ready for the turning. The entrance of the new-comers by the back door—it was affectation in Elk Mountain to use any other entrance—diverted her from her task. She saw that the critical moment had arrived. The first glance she met was Loiseau's black and glittering one. Although he came last and was dwarfed even to insignificance by Mrs. John Holme's bosom and Enoch's towering shoulders, yet, by the irresistible magnetism that draws together the eyes of those who love or hate each other, their looks crossed before Tyke had closed the door.

"Dear me suz, Enoch," she said, laying her turner upon the table, "I'm right glad to see you; you 'ain't been here since Lizzie's funeral. She was awful took up with you."

She spoke of her dead daughter in the dry and

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practical tone which is characteristic of the Elk mountaineer.

"Sarasose, you're as purty as a drawing-picture in that black hat. I declare, it's a shame to let you take it off."

Mrs. Newcome was staving off the evil hour by extraordinary effusiveness. It was not so much ill-feeling as embarrassment that made this final meeting painful. She was conscious that around the parlor door Eli's wife and Gene Lawless sat within range of vision. Loiseau, unnoticed by her, had possessed himself of the turner, and while Mrs. Newcome kissed Sarasose's cheek he turned a cake whose edges curled up warningly.

"Here is Tyke Loiseau," said Enoch. "He has come to eat your delicious pancakes."

"Not till I've turned them," cried Loiseau, laughing, and tossing over the second cake.

"Lord love ye!" said Mrs. Newcome, heartily, as she saw Tyke rescuing her neglected cakes from scorching. "You've saved my cakes!" She was more won over by Tyke's handiness than she would have been by "yards of palaver."

"I'll finish them, Mrs. Newcome," continued Tyke, waving his weapon airily. "You can't cook cakes for sour apples to-night."

This was the keenly anticipated reconciliation scene over which Eli's wife and Gene Lawless eagerly craned their necks, and numerous other unfortunates out of eyeshot and earshot suppressed their curiosity till the homeward jaunt.

Eddie, the store-keeper, arrived just in time for the Loiseau cakes, which, done to a turn and plentifully sandwiched with butter and maple syrup,

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made a lordly pile, out of which sections were cut that appeased the physical, if not the mental, appetite of the famous social.

"I reckon this ain't what you're used to," said Si Newcome, modestly, as Colonel Hollister inclined gracious spectacles and the clerical smile towards his share of Adirondack cakes.

"Mebbe you'll set all the more store by it," said Si's wife, far from modestly. "City folks telled me last summer that these here Adirondack cakes you couldn't get nohow in the city."

"They're a prime article, Mrs. Newcome," Colonel Hollister's benedictory voice replied, "and certainly cannot be surpassed.

"Thet's right, they can't be beat," interpreted Eddie, the wag, folded snugly among a bunch of tittering girls.

He demonstrated his assent by boldly seizing Nance Hartle's section and carrying it to his plate, to the huge delight and pretended wrath of his female satellites.

Mrs. John Holme and Mrs. John Hollister sat side by side. They had passed the glacial epoch where experimental amœbæ of conversational effort lay embedded in the ice of mutual non-understanding, and had reached the stone age of social intercourse. Mrs. Hollister's well-meant impertinences rattled along Mrs. John Holme's front of calm silence. She found it difficult to get hold of people except from the vantage-point of favor bestowed. Advice and sympathy, her special line, were clearly out of place to-night. Mrs. Holme was a deep-bosomed, placid matron who exchanged the frivolous small coin of intercourse for nuggets of quiet,

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that sooner or later made her *vis-à-vis* feel the ineffectualness of speech. The neighbor who came to her house to "sit and visit" went away inexpressibly soothed. One grew well acquainted with her by virtue of her reticence. Mrs. Hollister, having beaten an extraordinary extent of territory for a subject of common interest, finally called in her pack of hounds, and resolved to sit at the foot of a tree and wait.

"This here game law is a sell," Gene was saying to Colonel Hollister, "with every damn warden looking out for his own section. I kin jest tell you there be more deer kilt in winter than all the sporting fellows shoots in season."

"What do you mean?" said Hollister, quietly, who, being a State Commissioner, took a deep interest in the matter.

"Just this, cunnel; no one's going to fetch up his neighbor before a justice jist for killin' meat. And them deer be oun, anyhow, more'n those guys that sets at Albany and passes laws and regulations."

"What would you suggest?"

"What would I sugest? I'd sugest that, if them laws is meant to be followed, they send up some damn fool from New York who won't have no feelin' abaout enforcing them on we fellers. Them's my sujestions, cunnel."

Gene passed a hairy hand over his mustache ends and regarded the colonel combatively.

"But a New York man wouldn't be apt to know the woods," urged Hollister, gently.

"The devil he wouldn't. I seen more city men lost in the North Woods than you could throw a

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stick at. 'They're a green lot, beggin' your pardon, cunnel, but you don't belong to them, for your father was raised in Essex County, and he was a woodsman by natural right. So be you, I've heard John Holme say."

The respect felt by Elk Mountain for a true woodsman was only equalled by its contempt for one ignorant of the craft.

"Gol, some of them fellows dozen't know up hill from down, and I see one fell a tree and ast me afterwards what an undercut was."

"Enoch, he be a master hand at cutting timber," whispered Eli Barhite, in the subdued tone customary to him when in his wife's company. "I've seed him fell a young spruce so true as to drive a stake into the ground twenty feet away."

In another part of the room there was a slight commotion of the sort that generally follows a request that some one will sing or play. Sararose promised to be second in entertaining the social, but first Alison must amuse them by some of her impersonations. She showed in quiet monologue and pantomime a girl with a guide, shooting her first deer.

"Ef thet ain't jest to the life," ejaculated Gene. "I declare to 't, if I didn't think Miz Ordway would go all to pieces when she laid eyes on her fust deer. There he was, standin' in the runway jest as nice, as she let out a scream that seart the bears on top of Elk Mounting. Gol, I was swearing inside, daown into my boots."

He chuckled grimly at the recollection.

"A milliner and her customers," announced Alison. This little skit thrilled the female portion of

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the audience with unspeakable delight. Eli's wife fairly wept into Mrs. Si's apron.

Human nature is the same the feminine world over. Elk Mountain did not boast French millinery establishments where confections in lace and fur burst out at the tops of iron stalks, enticing idle women to try them on before tall pier glasses, and homeless men to dawdle outside the window. What inscrutable attraction draws ragged loafers to showcases of cambric underwear and flowery toques? Yet Elk Mountain did have its semi-annual display of hats. Miss Susan Adick had abandoned school-teaching for the more remunerative task of millinery, and twice a year visited the shops of Utica, and afterwards made a circuit of the mountain villages, spending a week in each place and displaying her limited stock in the parlor of some favored friend or competing housewife. In Elk Mountain village the postmistress was the envied temporary owner of this delectable display.

"Mussy on me," Eli's wife moaned, "if thet gal dozen't hit off old Miz Swinger to a T! She sets and primps jest like a pigeon in the sun. 'Naow, don't you think daisies and rosebuds would be a mite more youthful?' she says, says she. I hear her with my own ears, Carry Newcome." Mrs. Eli heaved into one vast eruption of mirth.

Enoch took Sararose's hand to lead her to the piano. He was very proud of his little sister's voice. In the dark-red gown that Alison had helped her buy she was a picture that his eyes loved to rest upon. He did not know what a startling contradiction she was to the canons of art that were as the

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laws of the Medes and Persians to the good mountaineers.

"Who ever heard of a red-haired woman wearing a red meriny?" muttered Mrs. Lawless to her neighbor. "You'd think Sararose Holme had gone clean crazy."

"I declare to 't, it dozesn't look so bad," whispered Zuba Hartle, always inclined to free thinking. "I've seed sumac berries put into a jug with them reddish-brown hickory leaves, and they looked fine."

Zuba, with unconscious felicity, expressed the color scheme between Sararose's glowing copper head and the ruby tint of her dress.

"We're all here but grandfather," said Enoch, looking about the room. "Where is he? Not sick, Carry?"

"In the woodshed, nussing his cold fingers," she replied, bluntly, at which there was a general laugh.

"We must bring him in here to enjoy the evening with us. He will surely come," replied Enoch, confidently.

"Go and ask him," said Carry, at which there was another round of appreciative merriment.

"Let me go, too," said Sararose, the tender-hearted. "I will beg him. Won't you come with me?" She bent low to Alison and touched her hand.

Sararose had conceived a romantic attachment, the first of her lonely life, for Alison MacDonald. The delegation to the woodshed summoned all their art to soften the old man's stony pride.

"It doesn't seem half like old times without you in the arm-chair, such a comfortable arm-chair," insinuated Enoch.

Old Si changed his position on the hard bench.

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"Such good hot cakes and maple sugar."

Old Si swallowed uncomfortably.

"And Gene Lawless telling deer stories that ain't a candle to yours."

Old Si opened his mouth to speak and then closed it again resolutely. The two girls, standing arm in arm, next opened fire.

"Please, Mr. Newcome," said Sararose.

"Ef you two girls ain't a pikcher-card together!" exclaimed old Si, momentarily mollified by their twin beauty. "Where'd you git your black hair, Missy?"

Alison laughed. "They call me a gypsy."

"She be dark, but good-lookin', ain't she?" appealed old Si, turning to Enoch.

Enoch, who, up to that time, had fooled himself into the belief, because his heart was silent, that it was under control, felt something pull apart, and the old passionate plaint began again. He moved a step away from her.

"I have heard so much of your famous guiding days," Alison insisted. "Do come and talk with us a little."

Old Si's vanity yielded to feminine persuasion, and, with a girl on either arm, he was led captive into the best room.

"But I ain't agreein' to 't," he said, obstinately, as he met his daughter-in-law's glance of triumph when he had crossed the Rubicon.

CHAPTER XIX

Music and Games

SARAROSE's lovely voice trilled forth in a couple of old songs. Alison accompanied her on the quavering piano.

"Really exquisite," said Colonel Hollister, who was somewhat of a musical connoisseur. "Her tones are pure, and, what is rarer, she has accuracy of ear and an instinct for phrasing; don't you think so, my dear?"

Mrs. Hollister beamed approval.

"Volume and resonance would undoubtedly come with cultivation. Charming, my dear. Another!"

"Yes, another," echoed Mrs. Hollister.

Sararose sang again, while Richard turned the leaves. "Capital," he murmured to her between stanzas.

"Enoch, I must talk to you about your sister," said Colonel Hollister, when the episode of music was over.

"Talkin' about Moose Pond," said old Si to Mrs. Hollister, "and how it came to git thet name, I kin tell you all about it."

He went on with the tale of the moose-calf he had found and tamed in his boyhood.

"Folks say as there wasn't never no moose in

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these parts, but thet's a lie, for I cot one myself. Talk about killing deer"—he gained a word or two from the discussion between Colonel Hollister and Enoch Holme—"it's a burning shame. A man ought to be strung up that 'ud touch a mother doe. I'd as soon kill a wumman, by gol, I would!"

Old Si Newcome, hard and implacable towards his own kind, with animals was soft-hearted to an unusual extent.

Meanwhile Alison was organizing a set for dumb crambo.

The players, numbering five, assembled in the kitchen for consultation and rehearsal.

"Eh, I don't ketch on," said Eli, after the hunt for the word had commenced. "We be goin' to act out *quack*? You needn't tell me I be goin' to make no darned fool of myself, squawlin' like a duck, with my wife settin' by to enjoy it!"

"You be the old hayseed, Eli," said Zuba. "You won't need to do any actin'."

"The rug is the duck-pond, remember," admonished Alison. "We three are the ducklings sailing off, Zuba is the astonished hen-mother, and Mr. Barhite the farmer."

"Cluck, cluck," interrupted the delighted Zuba. "Naow, Eli, don't forgit to shake your pan at me, and scatter the corn!"

"Go 'long! If I don't know haow to feed chickens, I cayn't l'arn from you!"

"Will you announce us, Mr. Barhite?" Alison was modestly keeping herself in the background, and assigning the choice parts to others.

Eli Barhite, bashfully beaming with this sudden

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prominence, pushed open the parlor door and bowed to the assembled company.

"Our word rhymes with *quack*," he began, pompously.

"You ninny!" came from behind in Zuba's sibilant whisper. "Don't give us away!"

"Rhymes with *track*," supplied Alison.

"With *fat*," Eli corrected himself loudly. "Our word rhymes with *fat*."

The announcement was greeted with discerning laughter from all except Si Newcome, the son, who looked blankly around, and asked his neighbor angrily what they was all cackling about. He didn't see no joke.

"Don't you see, he's give away the game?"

"Go 'long with you!" shouted Mrs. Eli to her shame-faced husband. "You're easy, you are!"

"Let's hev their piece, anyway," begged Si, uneasily, who did not yet quite understand the hilarity. He had a constitutional disability for games, and an immunity from getting the point that was marvelous. The players, who had elaborately performed in the kitchen under Alison's direction, and were in the first flush of histrionic ardor, were only too glad to comply with this request.

Enoch was head of the fleet of ducks. The intense gravity of his waddling and flapping scored the first hit.

When Zuba fluttered and cackled after them, and was finally consoled with imaginary corn, scattered by Eli's liberal hand, the motive of the game dawned splendidly upon Si's dormant senses. He understood and signalized his burst of clarified intelligence by a tremendous slap of Eddie's knees.

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"I'll be blowed, man!" he roared, "if they be'nt actin' out a string of them confounded ducks—quack! quack! Oh, the Lord Harry!" His clairvoyance almost stunned him.

"Wasn't that what Eli telled us in the first place?" said Mrs. Si, scornfully.

"Quack! quack! Oh, the Lord Harry!" gloated Si, dead to reproof and oblivious to scorn.

"Did you ever see the likes of him?" remarked Mrs. Si, with wifely contempt. "He wouldn't see the sun if it was ace of hearts in his hands."

"Enoch! Enoch!" clapped the young people, as the players retired to the green-room.

"That's an encore for you," said Alison. "You were certainly the star."

"By virtue of sheer ridiculousness."

"But they want you again."

Enoch repeated his pantomime, to the immense delight of the audience. There are few things so deliciously funny as Olympic gravity and height converted to the ends of buffoonery. Eli Barhite was not allowed to be prologue next time, though he asserted a thorough understanding of his duties.

They had settled on the word *pine*. Alison was quiet while they rummaged for the appropriate jingle to give their audience a clew. They had been previously instructed as to the nature of rhyme, but still suggested such combinations as miss and dip, reap and sweet, and assonances remoter yet, as proper fulfilment of the laws of rhyme.

The hunt for a rhyme to *pine* presented difficulties that were struggled with in silence, while a dozen rhymes chattered at Alison's ear.

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"Line," suggested Zuba, looking doubtfully towards Alison. "Good! Will you announce?"

Enoch was protagonist in this episode, acting out a wood-chopper attacking a pine. It was melodrama rather than burlesque, and commanded the closest attention.

He selected his tree, measuring its girth, and indicating its height by an upward glance, so that the forest and a great tree at once sprang to view for every one but Si, who was angrier than before at the others for their superior perception.

"It's *tree*."

"It's *wood-chopper*."

"Hush! they don't hitch up with *line*." Now Enoch made the undercut, and then he bent his stalwart frame to the axe.

"He'd better take a saw to it," muttered old Si. "Them big spruce is like iron."

Enoch, amid laughs from the audience, dropped his imagined axe, and followed old Si's advice. One could almost hear the saw grating and creaking through the resistant wood as Enoch's strong arm moved back and forth, and the veins on his temples bulged.

"She's stuck in the sap," muttered old Si, sympathetically, as Enoch drew his breath and wiped his forehead. "You might as well try to cut molasses as to fetch her through."

Enoch sprang backward to watch, as the great tree toppled and fell.

"Git out of the road!" shrieked witty Eddie, and Sararose, in a line with the tree's direction, jumped like one shot.

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There was applause, and the second dumb-show was over, but the word was not guessed.

"Do you know what it is?" said Sararose to Richard.

"I can guess," he answered, laughing.

"Don't let us tell the others."

"Never!"

"What are you two rogues plotting?" asked Colonel Hollister, peering over kindly spectacles.

Loiseau followed the kindly glance with one of jealous suspicion.

The second pantomime interpreted the word as a verb. Alison had arranged an affecting tableau, with Zuba as a young widow pining over her lost love, reading his old letters, and weeping into a handkerchief. But at the last moment, practising the tears before a cracked mirror in the kitchen, Zuba collapsed into giggles, and declared that she was too "pumpkin-faced" for the rôle. Eli, grown courageous through dramatic triumphs and continued absence from his wife, heartily abetted her in this decision, and received a box on the ear for his pains.

During all the evening there had been the slightest undercurrent possible, but nevertheless an undercurrent, of mute interchange between Enoch and Alison. For two people who are in sympathy will converse across a roomful of people, and talk between the lines of spoken colloquy. Enoch, strongly controlling his passion for Alison, was rendered calm by her presence and the urgent necessity for self-control. His manner betrayed nothing of the inward agitation, the haze of delight in which he moved only bringing to his eyes and voice a certain remoteness as he addressed Alison. The vague elation that

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one person feels reaches another in a still vaguer form, a spiritual odor or the steam of an invisible brew. A comrade will not always understand the source of this transmitted emotion, and will fancy it an unexplained mood of one's own.

Alison, touched by this secret atmosphere, would like to have risked a renewal of intimacy with the man who had so passionately loved and renounced her. The remoteness of his manner piqued her curiosity. She was woman enough for that. What woman is there without the potentiality, at least, of a coquette? One does not wish the man for whom one is sorry to bear his loss too easily, or forget too soon. Man's renunciation is woman's mortification.

Since the afternoon under the golden beech-tree, Alison had seen Enoch but twice, once at his house and once at church.

"We have not seen much of you lately, Mr. Holme."

(Between the lines read: "I have missed you.")

"I have been cutting timber up on the mountain." ("My daily work absorbs me.")

"By Lost Inn?" ("You see I remember our afternoon there.")

"Yes, and have hardly been home but for Sundays." (Enoch fences, parries.)

"Lost Inn is beautiful." (She pursues him.)

"I shall not forget that storm and the circle about the roaring fire." ("It is you that have made it memorable.")

"Where is Mr. Mayhew? He interested me greatly." ("You see I am thinking of another.")

"He is busy with his East Side—but there, Zuba is ready. Let us do our turn."

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(The foils are dropped, Enoch has covered himself successfully, Alison has not made her points.)

"And am I to do the pining?" asked Enoch.

"It will be beautiful. After your scene as the wood-chopper, we have perfect confidence."

"I may think of you as the loved and lost?" he smiled. ("I can play with fire now and go unscorched.")

How intricate is human speech that two can thus talk intimately and be unheard!

"He is cured," thought Alison, with the slight pang of wounded vanity. She was truly a woman, and therefore had a tinge of vanity. She was earnest, and therefore despised herself for it.

The scene went on, Alison discovered; enter Enoch, kneels, reaches for her hand; Alison rises, shakes her head, refuses her hand. Exit Alison.

Enoch gloomy, elbows on knees, head in hands. Enter Eli, as postman. Enoch reaches eagerly for letters. Eli assort's his handful, shakes his head, passes; demonstration of grief from Enoch, and renewed melancholy. Enter Zuba, with tray; food offered and refused. Exit Zuba. Enoch pulls out old love-letters, reads, kisses, ponders, throws them on the floor; final tableau, head sunk on table in dejection.

Objective result, utter bewilderment of the Elk Mountain social. "It is the same word as before," explained Alison, "but in a different sense."

"'Pears to me like moon-calf," gurgled Mrs. Barhite.

"You will have to act it," said Enoch to Alison, as they went out. "I did not do it well."

"You were not properly grief-stricken," said Alison, reproachfully.

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"You can chop a tree, but you can't do the lonesome for a cent," remarked Eli Barhite.

"It requires more experience, I suppose," Enoch replied, toying rather painfully with words that meant much to him. "A woman can always pretend. Now it is your turn, Miss MacDonald."

He adjusted a mournful black shawl about Alison's head. She pinned it here and there to make the lines more becoming.

"There is no man in this," she said; "the man has already become a memory."

She could not help a quick unveiling of her eyes to him as she spoke.

Alison's impersonation proved clarifying. A photograph from the piano was a valuable property. Over this she pored, and her pale face, between the black folds, indicated, even for Elk Mountain's unsentimental apprehension, lonely grief.

"She do look sweet and sad," murmured Nance.

"She's takin' on drefful," said Grandma Si, furtively wiping a tear.

"Say, by gol!" chuckled Eddie to Si, "it be your pikcher she's takin' on so abaout."

"Peaky and piny, poor thing!" said Mrs. Barhite, aloud, in hearty condolence.

"Pine!" came a burst of divination from the superior intelligence of the crowd.

Then the players' part passed to another more vociferous group. Alison, Enoch, and their support mingled with the audience.

A little bit of insincere intercourse between people who feel deeply leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. Perhaps it was this dissatisfaction that made Enoch eager for a renewed talk with Colonel Hollister about

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his sister's future. Colonel Hollister was one of the few men whose advice Enoch sought.

"There are only two things," said Enoch, "that would make me hesitate to adopt your suggestion as to sending Sararose to New York. One the expense, the other her development under those conditions."

"Which is the more deterrent?"

"The expense can be met," said Enoch. He would not let Colonel Hollister know of the privations he would gladly endure for Sararose's sake.

Colonel Hollister knew the temper of his man well enough to abstain from offering financial aid. Music was his hobby, and for the sake of a musical protégée he would think nothing of a thousand or five thousand dollars, which he would call a loan or not, as befitted the persons with whom he dealt. But the Holmes were a singularly manly breed, and the relations between the Holmes and the Hollisters, persistent now for more than a generation, were of the self-respecting kind that neither seeks nor offers patronage.

"Sararose has a remarkable voice, I assure you," said Colonel Hollister.

"It gives me pleasure."

"It will give the world pleasure if it is trained."

Enoch glowed with reflected pride. The glory of distinction, of pre-eminence, was his ambition, and his ambition was such that it hurt him for any one of his kin to be satisfied with mediocrity.

"The expense can be met, for if I am foreman in the woods next winter—"

"You shall be. That is understood."

Enoch grasped Hollister's hand. "Still, I can-

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not quite make up my mind to let Sararose go."

"Your father will miss her?"

"Daddy will live with John; I shall be in the camp all winter, but—"

"What, then? The way seems clear. You are not afraid she lacks in talent?"

"Frankly—I am afraid—for her."

Colonel Hollister was incapable of understanding Enoch's doubt of Sararose. He believed in his wife and children as he did in himself.

"Mrs. Hollister and Miss MacDonald have taken the greatest interest in your sister. They will do all in their power to look out for her and keep her from loneliness."

That night Enoch and Sararose were up till very late in the little white house on the Saranac road. The girl sat on the floor by her brother's side, and, with her head on his knees, listened to his hopes and fears for her. His hopes for her that her womanhood would be lofty and noble, her sincerity, her courage, her faith in God unblemished, and that the winter's work would be but the beginning of a serious career, that her voice might be dedicated to God's service—all these hopes were responded to by her with buoyant enthusiasm. When one is on the threshold of a great happiness how easy it is to respond to another's wishes. His fears for her he but half expressed, for she, perhaps, was ignorant of her own weakness. Sararose made soulful promises to satisfy his demands. It is easy anticipatorily to forego, for the sake of a present acquisition. It requires little pain to deny one's self butter to-morrow for the sake of jam to-day.

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"There will be many dangers for you, Sararose," said Enoch; "alone, a young girl, and innocent as you are."

"Pooh!" laughed Sararose, compassionately. "I am not so innocent as you think. I know enough to cross a street and to ask policemen."

In her inmost heart the thought of encountering dangers, with only herself to look to, and a beneficent brother away in the mountains, his overlordship limited to pen-and-ink advice, was delicious. Danger to one who has never encountered it, who is young and has lived in constraint, is a word full of the rosiest color, and intoxicates like a magic spell. It would be hard to define the youthful idea of an unknown experience. How it comes, like a person stepping by, the face and the carriage, the shape and the garments worn, the voice and the eyes—how impossible, how contradictory, how indefinite, how bewildering! One who has both anticipated in delirium and experienced in joy, would not part with this vague mirage of ignorance for all the clear-cut pictures of experience.

"It is not the material dangers that I fear, but others which will come upon you suddenly, for which you are not prepared. You do not understand me; you are too innocent to understand. Never mind."

The innocent little head that Enoch looked down upon was full of wicked consciousness that she knew perfectly well the dangers her brother feared, and that she—well, she might not consider them dangers at all. Many a demure silence is full, within, of temptation to spicy speech. How near the two heads were, and how unaware each of the other's thought. Sararose reflected, mischievously, what a mercy it

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was that her thoughts were her own. Enoch reflected upon the transparent simplicity of her face.

"In the course of your study you may occasionally have opportunity to go to the theatre or opera, but I do not wish you to accept. People will argue that the opera will be an inspiration and guidance to you in your work."

"Yes, Enoch, to hear the great singers would be inspiring."

"But there would be, along with it, so much spurious art and pretence, mere excitation of the sense by gaudy sights and trumped-up situations, that the good is more than neutralized by the harm."

"Ah, Enoch, it wouldn't harm me."

"You, of all persons, it would harm, for you are finely strung and susceptible. Besides this, there is the moral life of the opera singers to consider. They find the temptations of the stage wellnigh impossible to resist. Oh, Sararose, no one of mine, if I can prevent it, shall ever countenance such evil-doing."

"No one of mine!" How Sararose hated the phrase. What a weapon it had been, extending the sphere of Enoch's responsibility to such unpleasant largeness!

"You might even be tempted to consider opera singing yourself, and, my dear little sister, I had rather see you in your grave here at my feet than prima donna behind the footlights."

Sararose's heart swelled with gratitude that she was not in her grave at his feet. Distracting visions fluttered before her of a prima donna in a diamond tiara, with a row of little gas-jets in front and a bank of American beauty roses behind her. She wondered if the tiara would be becoming, and whether

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or not there would be cards with the roses. She had just decided to make her last bow, with one long-stemmed rose held against the white of her draperies, when she heard Enoch's question:

"Will you promise me, dear, that you will never go to the theatre or opera?"

Never is such a frightful word. It struck a chill to Sararose's heart.

"Never?" she trembled, lifting her eyes to the intense blue bent above her.

"Perhaps I should not say *never*. Not for a year; we will begin with that."

It was hard for Sararose to stand the intense blue of those eyes, but their very intensity made her feel that this winter in New York was to be a fact. It was well worth the price of a promise, even of a broken promise. Oh, Sararose! How can you be so frail, with such strength of will and purpose yearning above you?

She would read her Bible every morning, pray every night, attend church regularly, wear her stout shoes and her thickest underclothing, things she particularly detested, go to bed early, practise faithfully, and write to Enoch every day. Her eyes were angelic as she kissed Enoch good-night.

She slipped between the cold sheets, with the one thought, *liberty*, tingling like elixir through her veins.

CHAPTER XX

The Gown

ALISON's wedding was to be late in October, with only a quiet family party present.

"I do not want it to be a satin marriage," she said, "the usher-and-bridesmaid kind, but just a simple ceremony, in the woods under the scarlet shadow of the maples."

"Scarlet?" asked Mrs. Hollister, horrified. "Alison, my dear! What will you wear?"

Alison had made the wedding dress herself, and no one had seen it.

"If it were August, I would wear clematis. That is white for you, dearie. And I love clematis. It is the very spirit of the fields, virgin but wild, shy but wayward. And how it is the embodiment of motion!"

"You dear little raver!" said Ysobel, affectionately, kissing Alison's fluttering fingers into quiet. And then she whispered: "But please wear some fig-leaves, besides. I will sew them for you."

"Hush! The fig-leaves are sewed. I want you all to see them. Come."

They went together to Alison's room, Ysobel, June, and the three Mrs. Hollisters—Mrs. John, Mrs. Edward, and Mrs. Edward, Junior. Mrs. John,

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stout, florid, generous, a committee woman by nature and charitable by predilection, was the exact opposite of Mrs. Edward, hollow-eyed, slender, brusque, with a temperamental fondness for literature and Bohemians. Each considered the other peculiar, given over to fads, and each deprecated the other's influence over young people. No common friendship was possible between them without some heart-burning and confidential advices to the third party concerning the evil ways of the antipode. Long friction between them had rubbed off the outer edges of discomfort, so that to an amused and sympathetic family circle their disagreement was only a subject of delicate repartee. Both being very fond of Alison, all of her tact and sincerity was required to hold the situation without compromise to either one of her friendship for the other. Tact without sincerity is only a temporary expedient, and smooths over the difficulties that arise but once. This sort of tact many women possess, and it makes for them enemies as well as friends. The other kind of tact is a life-long resource and power.

Mrs. John liked colored cooks and stately dinners; Mrs. Edward, a Japanese chef and *petit soupers*. Mrs. John patronized hospital bazaars and educational alliances; Mrs. Edward, art leagues and Bohemian séances. Mrs. Edward abhorred the satin and diamonds that were the glory of her sister-in-law; Mrs. John sniffed at the Liberty fabrics and the "Egyptian beads" that Mrs. Edward languidly affected. Mrs. John had a hearty and expansive laugh; Mrs. Edward, a long, insinuating smile. Mrs. John gave you buxom embraces; Mrs. Edward held your wrist symbolically.

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Edward Hollister, Junior, differentiated the two by calling the one abstract and the other concrete.

"Mamma is a figure of speech, auntie a figure of —flesh."

"Too, too solid!" exclaimed Mrs. Ned, who could be depended upon to finish with irreverence.

"I never knew a bride so little absorbed in her trousseau," said Mrs. John, half reproachfully, as they entered Alison's room.

"It's delightful of you, Alison," said Mrs. Edward, quickly, and June smiled at Mrs. Ned. A reproach from one of the elder ladies met an instant response of approval from the other one, except at those critical times when one unfortunately preempted the other's territory of natural domain, leaving the dispossessed one in a dilemma.

"I have been thinking a great deal of the wedding-gown," said Alison, "but all the rest of the clothes seemed too trivial."

"Trivial!" exclaimed June; "a trousseau trivial! I think clothes are the solemnest things in the world. I never feel so deeply religious as when I'm standing before the dressmaker. It's a rite."

"A sacrificial one," said Mrs. Ned, fingering the ends of her lace fichu.

"More honored in the breach than in the observance, in my case," remarked Alison. "Now sit down, all of you, please. Ysobel, those balsam pillows on the floor are for you."

Ysobel, strangely quiet, nestled on the heap of pillows below Alison's dressing-table.

"What's the matter, Ysobel?" asked June, her feet dangling from the high window bench. June's voice had a peculiar, penetrating quality, which her

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personality had not. She was not heartless, but soulless. The vital things of life slid from her like mercury from your fingers. There seemed nothing in her to apprehend soul feelings, no spiritual tentacles which caught at the floating motes in the atmosphere. She presented a hard, bland surface to the world of feeling. Not her mind, but her soul, looked intelligence.

Ysobel glanced up at her with one of her unusual looks, the frightened transparency of a child. This look came into her eyes at times, if her silence or preoccupation was suddenly broken in upon, the look of an imaginative child who sees spectres at twilight and is ashamed to trust the grown-ups with his fears.

"I was thinking," said Ysobel, curtly. "Leave me alone, June-bug!"

"June-bug" was Ysobel's epithet for Miss Hollister, and heartily condemned by that young person as foolish and inappropriate. Alison thought she understood its appropriateness. Closely as she and June had been thrown together, interwoven as their lives and experience had been, yet there was more kinship between Alison and the reckless, cynical, free-thinking Ysobel than between the two blameless and enthusiastic young girls.

Certain it is that there was a translucent something in Ysobel Ruddle's eyes and laugh that many acts of her life belied, and even in after-years when she had crossed the boundary there was a crystal understanding between her and certain pure souls that the censors of morality failed to fathom. It was plain enough to Alison what shining stone of remembrance lay at the bottom of Ysobel's pool of

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silence. Alison felt that delicious sadness that comes of another's sorrow pressed at one's own moment of happiness. It tinged her mood with tenderness as a young mist softens the splendors of dawn on a hill-top.

"Remember, Alison, that I haven't seen a blessed thing of your trousseau," said Mrs. Edward, following Alison to the chiffonier, "and I want to see every rag, from travelling-coat to night-gown."

"Oh," laughed June, "say *robe de nuit*, it sounds so much more—"

"Prudish," said Mrs. Edward. "Night-gown is plain English; no dreaming-robe or resurrection-garment for me."

"I always say 'nightie,'" said Mrs. John; "it has such an affectionate sound."

"I've only one thing to show," said Alison, "so please don't embarrass me by talking of lace camisoles and things. You know it's a concession that I'm to have any kind of a wedding at all."

"What an immoral spirit!" said Mrs. Ruddle, with a gleam.

"I always said, and Richard agrees, that a big, fussy wedding is a travesty of what should be the most sacred, intimate, shyest ceremony of our life. Why the vulgarity persists amazes me. The very thought of a column in the society news, gifts and gowns in gaudy enumeration, makes me shudder. And a churchful of staring, gossipy people to run the gamut of, no more your friends than they are capable of understanding friendship—the very idea desecrates marriage."

Alison was very serious.

"My child," said Mrs. John, reproachfully, "I

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was married in church; one of the largest weddings for many years in Philadelphia."

"I stepped out of a hansom into St. Marylebone," Mrs. Edward popped in, triumphantly, "just Edward and I, with cabby and verger for witnesses."

"Don't speak of it, Millicent," said Mrs. John, wriggling her stout shoulders suggestively. "Alison wouldn't do anything like that."

"What I should like," Alison hastened to say, "Richard and I, would be to jump off our horses after a canter through the woods some fine morning, step into a little country church, with the pines whispering at the door, and be married as simply as we fell in love."

"Bully for you!" said Ysobel.

"So hastily," complained Mrs. John.

"Not hastily, dearie. The mere moment of marriage matters little, the less premeditated the more beautiful and spontaneous. But never fear! In deference to convention and the preferences of all you dear people, the marriage day is fixed, and you are in here to see my wedding-dress."

"Did Madame Louise make it? You never would tell me," asked June.

"Yes, of course," Mrs. John answered, liking this way of showing her confidential relations. "It came yesterday."

"That was my travelling-dress, dear," said Alison. "Do you want to see it?"

The travelling-dress was spread out on the bed in its harmony of delicate browns and glistenings of pale color around the neck and waist.

"That coffee-colored chiffon is a dream," said June, "and the way she has sewed these straps on

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your skirt is stunning. I declare, I'm going to complain about this blue cloth she just finished for me. It ain't half as *chic*."

"Remember, Alison is a bride," Mrs. Ned consoled her.

"But the wedding-dress!" begged Ysobel, who began to suspect that Alison had a surprise in store for them.

"Before you see it, I want to explain," said Alison, standing with her back to them and lifting the lid of her box. "No, I think I won't." She took out from its tissue paper a heap of white, and laid it on the bed.

"Here," she said, modestly, standing on one side, with folded hands, like a child who displays its first picture on a slate.

"Spread it out," said June, dropping from her window-bench to join the little group.

"It won't spread," Alison humbly confessed. "It's the limpy kind."

There was an interval of silence as the women gazed sympathetically at the wedding-dress and then at Alison. They had been prepared to break into voluble admiration, but the plain and unadorned crêpy folds of the dress and the severe lines of the bodice, innocent of froth and frill, communicated an instant disappointment, which was followed by compassion for its owner. When a child of older growth displays for admiration a picture that no once can admire, he is met by the truthful pity of silence, the pitiful silence that surrounds infatuation. The same sort of silence surrounded Alison and her wedding-dress till June spoke.

The Gown

"It's the sort of thing that looks better on, isn't it, Alison?"

Every one laughed.

"You don't seem to understand," Alison said. "I made it."

"You? No!"

"Yes, with my own hands. I wanted to."

"I thought you hated sewing," said June, blankly.

"But I loved this."

"You dear, sentimental thing," sobbed Mrs. Edward, catching Alison in an unpremeditated embrace.

Mrs. John sat down dramatically in a large arm-chair and expressed her feelings by a series of tearful ejaculations. For the moment it was even forgotten that she and the arch-enemy mingled their voices amicably in the same strain.

"That accounts for all your mysterious absences from our piazza," said Mrs. Ned.

"When we thought you were resting," added June, a little bitterly, and still with the unappeasable wonder of the habitually curious.

"Dear Alison," murmured Mrs. John.

"Don't make so much of it," said Alison; "it seemed the most natural thing in the world. I wanted a simple gown, and it is so easy for me to carve out and put together."

"But I thought you hated it," repeated June, blankly.

"I do hate the most of sewing," said Alison; "it is heartless and mechanical. And so many girls I know fritter their days for the sake of adding a little to their store of finery. But this was different.

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With every stitch I was sewing in hopes and memories, and my wedding-day will be all the sweeter for my own handiwork."

"No one helped you?" asked Mrs. John.

"Only little Mary," said Alison, tenderly; "she hemmed this breadth with immense pains and unbounded delight. Look at the dear, little, irregular stitches."

"And she never told us, that precious chatter-box!" Mrs. John exclaimed.

"Dear, little, faithful soul," said Alison. "She was simply bursting with the secret. Listen, she is in the hall. Mary!"

Little Mary came running in, fresh from outdoors, with her hands full of Indian pipes.

"Look at ze littly pipes," she cried. "Zey are like dead ladies' fingers." She laughed jubilantly.

"You shouldn't talk like that, dear," said Mrs. John, mildly reproachful, "about dead ladies."

Mrs. John was superintendent of the primary department in the Sunday-school, and had a distinguished incapacity for taking children's points of view. Her method of subjugation was a combination of pompous condescension and colored picture-cards, interspersed with layers of moral instruction and equally harmless rock-candy.

Little Mary was silenced, not by the reproof, which, with a child's rare intelligence, she recognized as characteristic of its source, but by the sight of the great white secret lying exposed upon the bed.

"Oh, Alison!" she cried, in a round, amazed voice, like a bubble ready to break—"oh, Alison!" The baby mouth quivered.

The Gown

"It's all right, darling," said Alison, taking the child up into her arms. "It was time to tell."

"Did you show zem my piece?"

"Yes, Mary," said Mrs. Edward. "We saw your piece. It is bee-youtiful."

"I sink so," cried Mary. "Zat littly red place is w'ere I plicked my sum. Alison said, 'Don't cly. It makes it more plitty.'"

Ysobel had been very quiet for the last five minutes. She had left the group, and sat with her back to them, looking out of the window. Her handkerchief was rolled into a ball and clenched tightly in her right hand. She now rose and came impetuously forward.

"So you have sewed blood and tears, as well as hopes and memories, into your wedding-dress, Alison!" she exclaimed, in a loud, unnatural voice. Laughing, she left the room.

"What a terrible speech!" murmured one of the ladies.

Alison's expression was very grave as she folded the dress and laid it away.

"You didn't see her eyes," she said to Mrs. John, who was the last to go. "She had been crying."

CHAPTER XXI

Ysobel and Richard

THE high C of emotion cannot be indefinitely maintained. Grief and joy at the climax last but a moment. The apex is always a point. These are the limitations of the finite; perhaps in that realm where the Master-Musician holds sway the taut strings may sound their divinest note without breaking, but on earth it is mercifully not so. After the hour of intense joy or pain, some women seek the sensuous relief of tears. They are the simple, human souls. Some, to whom anguish comes remote and subtle—a thing interwoven with a hundred strands—plunge themselves in music or a poem. Imperceptibly their own sorrow will blend with ideal sorrows, and, like two streams, mingling, sweep to the sea of forgetfulness. Some, with shut ears and eyes, set a-going the dull treadle of daily work. These are the fortunate, to whom work is a commonplace and a necessity. Some—and these are the passive, deeply wounded ones—will sit and sit and sit, brooding, staring into the floor or wall, reciting hopelessly over and over again the tale of the unappeased heart. Some with manufactured gaiety will cheat their own soul of her due, and lure the world to a belief in their light-hearted shallowness. Pity these the most,

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for sympathy goes not out to them, the dreaded sympathy which is yet salvation.

Ysobel went from Alison's room down-stairs and out-of-doors. She passed by without speaking to the two men, pacing up and down the piazza, their pipes in their mouths; she did not answer Ned Hollister, tinkering with a broken golf-club on the bit of lawn. It was a chilly autumn afternoon, with bleak sunlight filtering through the clouds that veiled the sky. The papery beech-leaves fretted in the wind, and a thick mat of fallen foliage, bronze, dark-red, and mottled yellow, carpeted the underways. Ysobel ran down to the boat-house, where, behind its shelter, away from the wind, she sat in a pale strip of sun, and looked down into the water of the lake. She was quite hidden from view here, and, looking out across the water to the lonely other shore, could easily forget that she was near people. The water, like the sky, was still and gray, and reflected, with exquisite, subdued gradations of color, the autumnal woods opposite. What is the elusive charm of reflection? Like a story well told, or a portrait ideally treated, it doubles the beauty of the original—more than this, it adds an indefinable charm, a light that never was on sea or land. It is the beauty of unreality, the divineness of the unattainable.

One little scarlet maple flamed above and below the lake's border, set in a clump of olive-green cedars. Here was a band of filmy blue brushed across the hill-side, almost like a wreath of smoke resting on the tree-tops, a strip of burned woodland, the naked branches dreamily faint from this distance. Where the hills sloped down into Elder River there was a bit of hollow marsh-land, golden with coarse water-

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plants and sedges, that glowed like a round Etruscan brooch in its setting of reflected bronzes and garnets.

Ysobel had seized somebody's golf cape from a piazza-chair as she went by, and she wrapped this about her shoulders and knees as she sat there, painfully absorbed in her own thoughts, while the still autumn beauty preached endurance.

"What's the matter, Ysobel?" said a debonair voice. Richard Hollister dropped on the pier beside her. "You look like a sulky kitten in a muff."

"I'm in the devil of a humor, Dick!"

"Awfully sorry. Can I do anything?"

"No, you can't."

"Sorry again. I'd like to, Ysobel. But don't frown at me. I'd rather your smiles than your frowns, Ysobel."

"Let's drown ourselves. Here goes! One, two, three!"

"By George, Ysobel, are you crazy? You'd have gone over then if I hadn't caught you!" He held her by the arms, and drew her backward under the eaves of the little boat-house.

"Let me go, Dick."

"Not till you look me straight in the eyes and tell me that you're sane again."

Ysobel levelled her eyes straight at his—her great, splendid gray eyes, like a fearless boy's.

"Lordy, don't hold me with your glittering eye!" she cried, breaking out into one of her crystal smiles. "How do I look, your Dickship?"

"You have the eyes of an angel, Ysobel," he said, with the little quiver in his dented chin that came when he was moved.

Ysobel and Richard

"Rubbish!" she exclaimed, freeing herself from him and kicking up a stone amid a flying remonstrance of leaves. "Come on; let's have a ride."

"It 'll have to be a short one. Alison and I are going up to Enoch Holme's after dinner."

"Short or long, sad or gay, to paradise or perdition, I don't care, only let's ride somewhere, and ride hard."

As they walked to the stables together, Richard put his hand on her arm.

"I understand, Ysobel. But this will pass. You've such a lot to live for. Things are all before you, and you, with your talent and your charm, you can make them what you will."

"Maybe, but I've a fancy, Dick, that they'll make what they will of me."

"Go and get your habit on like a good girl, and I'll have the horses saddled by your return."

"I'm going to ride in this, if you please."

"In that golf skirt! But I don't please. It's too short."

She laughed, and swung off to the house.

Just as they were about to mount, Alison came out on the piazza.

"Pardon me a moment," said Richard to Ysobel. "Will you hold Dandy?" He handed her the bridle-reins, jumped to the ground, and ran towards Alison.

"Sweetheart, we're going for a little canter."

"I'm so glad. Cheer her up," whispered Alison.

"Good-bye," he said, kissing her.

"Good-bye. It's five o'clock, Dick. Remember we dine at six to-night, and we mustn't be late for Enoch Holme's."

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“Good-bye.” They kissed again, and then Alison watched the two equestrians out of sight, as they trotted slowly away among the trees of the forest. They waved their hands to her at the last curve.

Having left the woods, they cantered gayly through the village street, past the old mill, sunk in its gray stillness, and the white-painted houses of the village folk, with the geranium-bordered, straight walks to the door-step. Then came a bit of brushy wood, and then the cross-roads, where one turned to the right to follow the windings of Crooked Brook, away and away through a lonely country to a sequestered hamlet, with the unsuggestive name of Perkinsville; to the left one climbed a steep hill, up and up and up, and then one was on the breezy upland ledge, where Alison and Enoch had driven the night of the storm, with village, lake, and stream lying like a map below. They paused at the cross-roads, where behind the dusky fir-grove stood the sedate white church in its week-day reticence. Neither had yet spoken. The keen air had brought a flush of fine color to Ysobel’s transparent cheek and a dancing light to Richard’s eyes. He flicked his whip questioningly to right and to left.

Ysobel looked down along the Crooked Brook road, as it dipped and sank into a marshy thicket, where now the late autumn vines were blazing among the low alders and the red of the wild-rose hips decorated the road-side shrubbery.

“I hate the dreadful hollow below the little wood,” she said.

“Then,” said he, “leave me the common crofts.”

Ysobel pointed upward, leaning over her horse persuasively, as he broke into a long, easy gallop up

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the first incline. "That's the appropriate country," she said. "Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights."

Richard gained a place beside her, and the two horses fell into sympathetic company up the long hill. Companionship is one of the rarest, purest, most elevated of emotions. Next to love, it lies at the basis of civilization, and, unlike love, it never becomes a corrosive flame that eats away. When to the spiritual companionship is added the bond of a muscular exercise in common, there is I know not what added ease and intimacy of relation. The rhythmical unison of comrade feet beside one's own as one swings across country of a cloud-swept afternoon, the rhythmical unison of another paddle as one noiselessly slips down a bird-haunted stream, brings together two natures, two souls, as they never are brought together in other ways. And when the living beat of companion animals mixes with the beat of human hearts, as two ride side by side, another mysterious syllable is spelled in the mysterious language that souls speak. The inarticulate language of silence is so much more flexible, more potent, than the language of articulate noise.

They reached the top of the hill and rested. The two horses gave each other sidelong glances out of those wonderful liquid eyes that no man understands, and put trembling noses together in perfect understanding.

"Beautiful creature!" said Richard, patting the silky neck of Ysobel's bay mare.

"Dandy," said Ysobel, absently, putting an arm around Richard's to stroke his horse's head. "Oh, Richard, I thank you, I thank you!"

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"For what, child?"

"For this and this—and—you."

She laid a hand upon Dandy and Fantine, and then impulsively put her hand on his, which rested lightly on his pommel. Richard was nothing if not responsive, so he held her hand a moment, saying:

"'Tis easy to please you, Ysobel; command me again."

"Oh, it's not easy to please me, but you please me without trying, and the people who try don't please at all."

"Ah, you're a spoiled child. You've had too many dolls given you, and now you throw them away."

"Richard, look at me. *I've had too many dolls given me!*"

She repeated his words with such intensity that they had at once a new meaning. "Too many dolls, and never a warm human heart!"

Richard, not keyed up to her pitch, said lightly:

"Take mine, Ysobel," then, looking at her, saw that her eyes were full of tears.

Dandy and Fantine by this time had come to their own conclusions, and were walking along the sunset road, quietly, so as not to disturb their riders, who, as they well understood, were absorbed in matters that left them oblivious to the obvious equine necessity of going somewhere. A pair of tentative ears laid back; sensitive flanks that felt the relaxed limbs of the riders; then an exchange of equine looks that said, "We know"; a dilated nostril that said, "We understand"; and Dandy and Fantine had mastered the human situation.

"Forgive me, child," he said. He took her hand and kissed it.

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"I am sure you must be a delightful lover," laughed Ysobel, recovering herself. "Where are we going? I suppose it must be home."

"By George, no!" said Richard, fascinated by Ysobel's quick change of mood. The touch of her wrist, where he had kissed it, was still on his lips. Such a blend of tears and deviltry he had never before known. "Let's ride."

"To the sunset, then," said she, looking down the long stretch of twilight road, that dwindled to a pool of orange color, framed between converging forest, all in a purple mist of lace at the road's end.

"At this hour one must travel on and on, and one will at last find it."

"What?" asked concrete Richard.

"That," said Ysobel, pointing down the road to the orange pool. "Let's ride, ride, ride! Come, Dick!" Nothing but the sound of the horses' feet was heard as the figures galloped side by side, in the fast-gathering twilight.

"Dick," said Ysobel, "where are we going? To the end of things, I hope."

"If we go on and on," said Richard, "we shall come to Windy Flanders, and then to Loon Lake."

"I don't believe it. This is the road I have always looked for, and it leads to the End of Things. Ride, ride, ride!"

They rode on, and the twilight fell from the trees, the orange deepened to smoky red, faded to dull rose, shaded to lilac and violet, and still the dwindling distance narrowed to a pool of light between the purple tree-tops. As the road turned, the great top of Mount Marcy came up against the sky, and its crest was still rosy with the last sunlight.

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"Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights," chanted Ysobel, drawing rein and taking her hat from her head. Her loosened hair fell in a mass about her shoulders.

"There, don't move," said Richard. "You are perfect."

"What do I look like?"

"Just Ysobel — and — the dickens! You have made me late for dinner and for Alison!"

CHAPTER XXII

A Rainy Morning

It was an autumn day of the melancholy kind, monotonous drip, hooded skies, all the forest black with wetness, underfoot the leaves matted like layers of soaked sponge, overhead the clinging leaves beaded with rain from every point and angle. They drearily jostled each other, while the fitful gusts blew the alders slant-wise, and precipitated little individual showers from every beech-tree. A few crows circled and cawed with gloomy exultation about the edges of Lake Miquewauga. It was Alison's marriage-day.

"Isn't it too bad?" cried Richard's mother, comfortably. "Such a day for dear Alison and Richard!"

"They will have to take the stage to Elizabeth-town, that is all," remarked Colonel Hollister, dryly.

Richard and Alison had planned a horseback jaunt for the bridal tour. The ceremony was to be at noon, and then, as Alison gayly expressed it, they would gallop off in a glory of red and yellow leaves for the shores of Arcady. However, there was nothing romantic or spectacular in two mackintoshes and rubbered individuals creeping into a covered buck-board between accumulations of miscellaneous bag-

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gage, and rumbling away at a hand-trot between dripping forest aisles, to land at some lonely mountain inn, where the residue of summer visitors would hug their shawls and crochet-work in front of a meagre fire.

A very few guests were expected on the night train from New York, and among them Mrs. Hollister's clergyman, who was to perform the ceremony. A wagon-load of flowers had come up from the city the day before, mostly yellow and white chrysanthemums.

The alcove where Alison was to stand was banked with these, while halls and stairways were decked with autumn leaves and berries from the fields and woods.

Mary had for a long time been watching carefully over a little colony of bunch-berries that grew scarlet and plump in one of her particular "places" in a wood not far from the boat-house. Every simple and nature-loving child has this sense of ownership in certain beloved spots, which are hers and hers alone. The poor, sightless grown-ups pass them by without a gleam of understanding, while the little child that follows at their skirts feels her heart thrill with mutual understanding as her feet touch the enchanted particular "place."

On the morning of the marriage Mary looked out with despair on the gray rain that veiled the dining-room windows. She had gone to bed the night before full of the lovely surprise for Alison when she should bring her the cherished berries from her "place"; to have acquainted the grown-ups with her design, to have had any of their large, obtuse presences at the gathering, would spoil it all, take

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away the sweetness and the secrecy. Mary did not at all understand this mysterious "marriage" that all the house talked about, but it was something very nice, that made Alison kiss her, and hold her very close, and Dick call her "little sister."

"Eat your oat-meal, Mary," said Aunty Hollister.

"I tan't," said Mary, sadly.

"Why not, dear?"

"Because it's waining," and the tears welled up in her eyes.

"There's a good little girl," soothed Uncle Hollister, putting an extra spoonful of sugar on Mary's oat-meal. "She mustn't cry on Alison's marriage-day."

"It's clying out doors; so I've got to cly in here," reasoned she, valiantly choking down a small portion of porridge. Philosophy for a moment diverted her from her grief. "Do trees feel awful bad, same as littly gells? Is zere any one to comfort zem?" Alison had not yet come down to breakfast, so there was no one to answer Mary. She proceeded to answer herself.

"I suppose ze inuzzer and fazzer trees are good to ze littly trees."

Mary laughed at the thought, the dimples coming into her baby cheeks, that were still a little moist with recent tears. The elder folks talked among themselves till Mary, who had been deeply meditating along the line of parental mysteries, filled in a silence with:

"Enoch Holme has a fazzer. He plomised to bling me some paper-dolls zat his fazzer makes. I didn't know he had a fazzer. I sought he was a fazzer."

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After breakfast, Mary guilelessly asked for her coat and hat. An earnest debate ensued between her on the one side, and June and Mrs. Hollister on the other. The two grown-ups gently remonstrated against the child's whimsical design, but Mary was tragic in her persistence. Go out into the rain she must, and she must go alone, but she would only stay a little, little while, and she would not walk in the long grass, and all the rest of the morning she would be so good, and not ask anybody any questions, and not eat any candies, and not strum on the piano (dear, delightful pursuit of discords), and submit herself to Hannah's beautifying devices—to be scrubbed, ringleted, and frilled without a whimper or a wriggle.

Alison opened the door of her room opportunely, and Mary ran to her arms with a fresh plea for liberty.

"You all seem to forget zat I was six years old yesterday month."

Alison comprehended an unusual intensity in Mary's tone. "We will let her go," she decided, and little Mary, hooded and capped, and radiant, hastened out to her adored and particular "place" where grew the bunch-berries for Alison's "malliage."

It was a moist but triumphant little personage that burst into Alison's room later, with a stiff, crumpled frock, full of wet grass, tangled with the beloved berries. Alison picked out one by one the short-stemmed offerings, and promised to wear one in her hair, bridal-white to the contrary.

For a couple of hours Alison was alone in her room, with the pines against the window.

A cheery little fire of cones crackled in the grate.

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Alison sat in her dressing-gown, with her feet up on the fender, and a package of old letters in her lap. She had the very girlish habit of regarding life as divided into certain epochs, and of liking to mark these epochs from each other by sentimental boundaries. When she was a child, she had regarded sixteen as the landmark between childhood and young ladyhood, and had figured herself at sixteen as a new self, with ideals, privileges, and possibilities sprung full-grown from the momentous anniversary birthday. At the age of twelve she had indited a letter addressed "To myself on my sixteenth birthday." This letter Alison had just found, done up with others of later days, from her mother and father during her early girlhood, written to her when either she had been away at school or they in Europe.

To the sympathetic ear of sixteen, little twelve-year-old poured out her childish joys and sorrows, related as if to a stranger the daily experience of her life, and then asked eagerly after the welfare of sixteen, and offered glowing conjectures at the shrine of her beauty and emancipation.

It read, in the sprawly, irregular hand not yet emancipated from copy-book curves:

"DEAR ME,—I don't mean that I feel badly, but it's because I'm writing to me when I'm sixteen. Oh, how I do wish that I could see you and know where you are and how big you will be. I was twelve years old last November, but it is now January. I have to wear my hair loose because mamma says it is more fashionable, but Mary Haskins says it looks like a Hottentot, and it gets in my eyes when I do my lessons. She has yellowish hair and nice smooth curls like buns. I tried to wet it and brush it very flat before I go to

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school, but Mary sits behind me, and she wrote 'niggah' on her slate and passed it over to me. The teacher called her up for this, but I had rubbed it out, and Mary said she had written down an example in fractions. Fractions is something dreadful. Dear myself, are you doing fractions now when you read this? I s'pose you understand all about them and the queer problems at the end of the book. Do you have to study? Of course not, for you are a young lady, and have dresses with long hems that make a lovely sound when you come down-stairs, and little girls behind you have to walk very slow for fear they will step on the tail of your ruffles. I suppose you do your hair up on the top and wear a flower in it for dinner. Is it so very kinky? I never saw a grown-up lady with hair like mine, so I think it will change. I like poetry. I like Shelley, but Dick says I'm queer and poetry is rot. Don't you think Shelley is beautiful? I like Shakespeare's plays, especially 'Romeo and Juliet,' and 'Lear.' Lamb's tales are almost nicer. I do love stories about lovers and moonlight and stained-glass windows like St. Agnes's Eve. I think it would be nice to run away like that. Dick says that is only in books, and that love is silly stuff for girls to chatter about. I wonder who my husband will be. Dear myself, you probably know, for you are sixteen and maybe engaged to him. You don't have to go to bed at half-past eight, do you, and have you learned to play pretty pieces, or do you have to do tiresome scales and exercises? My music teacher is very handsome, but cross as scissors, and when I strike the wrong note he sticks his fingers into his ears and jumps up, shouting, 'Great heavens, young lady!'

"I have often said that I was going to name my oldest little boy Ethelwulf, and my oldest little girl Gwendolen. I think I will have about six. I haven't decided whether three boys and three girls or four boys and two girls. Aunty Hollister says it isn't proper for little girls to talk about their children, but I don't see why.

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"You can't answer this, I know, for by the time you get it, there will be no I.

"Your loving self,

"ALISON."

Here the little document ended, and Alison smiled as she put it back into its childish pink envelope, the one existing sample of a long-ago vanished box of stationery she had received the Christmas that she was twelve.

"I wonder who my husband will be!"

How life had glided along for her, so that now the unlooked-for change that had come into her life, the loss of her home and of her parents, seemed almost as if it had always been part and parcel of her existence, and the most natural event of all, this development of love between her and her playmate—Richard—their betrothal, seemed at that moment curious and startling.

The little fire of pine-cones blazed away and sank into leaf-like embers of gold, and the gray rain fell across the window. A wind that had just risen tossed the plumes of the pine-tree about, and the sound of the sea was in its branches. It is possible for the mind to be so absorbed in a single thought, or, rather, so wrapped about with a certain mood, that time passes, and one wakes as from a deep sleep, with the feeling that soul has been absent from body, and with entire ignorance of what soul has been doing. The very intensity of mood blots it out from after-consciousness. It must have been a sudden illumination of the outer world, one of those openings of the sky that presage the clearing of a windy autumn storm, that roused Alison to her surroundings again.

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She turned to the packet of letters. They were the chief reminders she had of her father and mother, and father and mother had been much in her mind to-day. She could not forget them on her marriage-day. It was like going into the past to read these letters, with their tender, homely little pieces of advice, the dear, familiar details of home. Here was the last letter her mother had ever written her, received just before the dreadful telegram that had summoned her to her father's grave. It had been written the night before, all unknowing of the future:

"DEAREST DAUGHTER,—Papa has gone to the club, and Mr. and Mrs. Everett, who were calling, have just left. The house is quiet, and I am going to take these few moments of leisure time to answer your letter that came yesterday.

"I am very sorry that you have been having this trouble with your throat. Do not forget to gargle night and morning and wear your furs whenever you go out. If it is particularly windy or cold, a layer of paper placed under your coat is a splendid thing."

("Dear mother, how practical and thoughtful she always was.")

"The house looked very pretty for our tea last week. We had it decorated with asparagus and yellow flowers—genista, I think they call them—and Landor's orchestra sat behind the palms in the alcove. People seemed to enjoy themselves, and a great many asked after you. Old Mrs. Carlton said she missed you. Dick was here from Yale over Sunday, and looked stunning in his new clothes, and overflowed with slang and good spirits. The Mayley girls went fairly wild over him, but I don't think he admires them particularly."

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("Dear mother, how fond she always was of Dick!") The letter continued in the newsy, scrappy, delightful, matter-of-fact way that home letters, and home letters alone, have. Alison read, with eyes moistening:

"Baby is growing every day. She can creep backward, and waves her hand good-bye very prettily. Dick taught her to throw kisses, and she practised it this morning on the cat when the cook sent her miauling from the kitchen into the entry.

"Your father is still a little out of sorts, has no appetite, and doesn't sleep well. I am quite anxious about him, but he will not go to the doctor. If he doesn't improve, we must try to persuade him to take a trip to Bermuda, or some other voyage."

("Poor, dear father! He embarked on his voyage, and without persuasion.") The dark stain on the forehead came to Alison's sight.

There was a knock at the door. Alison remembered that she had promised to see Richard at a quarter before eleven.

"Sweetheart, not tears?"

"Mother's last letter, Dick."

"Come with me, Alison, into the den. Your fire has gone down, and your dear hands are cold."

"Yes, Richard, but only for a few minutes. Hannah is coming to help me dress."

Those last minutes together before the words of the ritual made them man and wife seemed to Alison in the future more sweet than any others. They were quite alone up-stairs, the door closed between them and the hall and stairs, so that the comings and goings below, and the subdued murmur of preparations,

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came to them faintly, like the murmur of remote things. Alison's heart was very tender with dead memories and the living one of little Mary's rain-wet hands and the apron full of berries. Her eyes overflowed into Richard's with a look he mistook for passionate love, and his eyes overflowed to hers with the eager illusion of a seeker after happiness. The asseverations of love that passed between them were in no material respect different from those under similar circumstances the world over. Richard had known many women, made love to several, been adored by several more, but through it all had regarded this as the one permanent devotion. He thought Alison the best woman in the world.

Alison had always loved Richard, and had never been in love. This sounds a paradox, but is nevertheless a truth. They had lived side by side for years, but neither had ever penetrated to the spirit of the other. There had not been even an eye-glance between the two souls. It is doubtful if the possession of so ethereal an element had even become known to Richard. Nevertheless, they swore eternal love, a kingdom that hearts and bodies have no share in. Perhaps it is true that the soul comes into its kingdom only across the valleys of sorrow and up the mountains of pain. Alison had suffered, the suffering of love, of loneliness, of humiliation, but she had suffered alone. Across her love for Richard had blown no wind of distrust, had come no shadow of fear.

Richard held her long in his arms before they parted. "My wife!" and "Husband!" were breathed between them. Long afterwards Alison remembered that she alone that morning spoke a word of the

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future. Richard lived in the passionate and joyful present.

Down below in the great living-room around the roaring fire was a scene of mild perturbation on account of a telegram. The minister had wired of an accident on his way to the Grand Central, which made him miss his train.

"He should have been asked to come up a day earlier."

"By all means. These Adirondack trains are none too frequent."

"But what shall we do about it?"

"Wire him to come up this evening."

"Such bad luck!" ejaculated Mrs. Edward.

"Not a bit of it," returned unsuperstitious Mrs. John. "The flowers will keep beautifully."

"And the breakfast?"

Mrs. John's face fell.

"My dear," said Colonel Hollister, "there is Enoch Holme."

"What of it?"

"He's a minister."

"Alison and Richard married by a mountain parson!" said young Mrs. Ned, warming her long, blue-veined hands over the fire. "That would be such an anachronism. That's not the word, but you know what I mean."

"It would be beautiful," said Mrs. John, after due deliberation. "Enoch is so fine and wholesome. Alison likes these mountain people."

"As part of the scenery," suggested Mrs. Ned, languidly.

"Enoch Holmes is a man worth knowing," said the Colonel, reprovingly.

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"Well, why don't some one send for him?" asked executive Mrs. John. "It is eleven o'clock, and Alison is beginning to dress."

"Shall I mention the matter to Alison, my dear?" asked the Colonel.

"No, John. It would only disturb her unnecessarily. I believe in keeping a bride out of the pre-matrimonial fuss, and Alison has been so sweet and tranquil."

The circle broke up.

"Is Alison ever anything but sweet and tranquil?" asked Mrs. Edward, to whose high-strung, excitable temperament Alison was balm.

"The dear child will be so pleased," said Mrs. John, self-gratulatively, already forgetting that the original suggestion had not been her own.

She moved stoutly towards the kitchen, that stretched beyond a series of passages and swing-doors.

Ysobel Ruddle came in from a walk, glowing-eyed and short-skirted, in time to hear the last words. Ned Hollister alone remained, nursing an Egyptian cigarette. She caught him by the lappel.

"What will the dear child be pleased about?" she demanded. "I always know by the tone of voice who's being discussed."

"At being married by Enoch Holme," laughed Richard's cousin, lighting a cigarette for Ysobel.

Ysobel whistled, and threw the lighted cigarette into the fire.

"I say," he remonstrated.

"I call it confounded bad luck," mused Ysobel, "to assist at one's own funeral."

Mrs. Ruddle, despite outward bluntness, was a person of much inward finesse.

CHAPTER XXIII

A Thankless Task

IF the soul never gives over longing, nothing that is desired is impossible. The soul will have none of the blank wall of denial, and beats itself against the stone face with endless iteration of *I can, I will*. As everything in the world is subjective, events only the coming home to ourselves of ourselves, and matter merely the shadow of idea, the impossible does not exist except for the folded hands of resignation or the unseeing eyes of despair. Before the outstretched hand the beloved object hovers. Though one cannot grasp it, it is there, and the very continuance of desire proves the persistence of possibility.

Enoch had been many times around the dreadful circle that those travel who begin at the starting-point of remediless pain. Then he had stepped out of his circle upon the straight road of daily monotonous work, only to find himself again in another dreadful circle that was still the same, treading out again the useless wine-press of the bitter grapes of pain. He would have given much not to have been invited to the MacDonald - Hollister wedding, but, having been asked, he grit his teeth and prepared his mind to go.

Pulling out a stump, as is well known, is one of

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the most laborious and temper-trying pursuits known to man, involving the most tremendous effort with the least discernible result. For this reason it was perhaps well suited to Enoch's mind on the morning of October 15th, representing concretely an abstract process.

Daddy and Azzy had long been plotting together an ingenious mechanical contrivance to be known as the Azrael Infallible Stump Extractor. So far, it had existence only on paper, and Enoch was working with the time-honored aids of a rope, a chain, and a pair of oxen. Daddy, in overalls and a sou'-wester, sat on the kitchen porch, stimulating by occasional advice. The rain was pouring down from a low, misty sky. In the ploughed garden-patch the wet had brought out vividly the umbers and ochres of the ploughed garden soil. One row of still upstanding fodder-corn showed a bleached tan almost like stacks of faded sunlight. Beyond, one looked into the black heart of the little spruce wood.

"Gee haw! Pull there, Spotty!"

Enoch's resonant voice filled the morning.

"Seems as if you might fetch the rope a little mite to the eastward," called Daddy, standing up in his excitement.

"I am going to loosen the soil a bit deeper," Enoch called back, applying himself vigorously to the spade. The meek, great animals blinked white eyelashes above melting eyes as they waited for the master. What did life mean to them who could only see a hand's-breadth ahead into the future of fodder and labor? It was likely that even dinner was a no more definite anticipation than rain to the unthinking flower. Yesterday's toil in the ploughed

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lands was more remote than a pre-incarnation. Sararose opened an upper window in the house and slammed back a green blind. Her long hair fell in smooth waves that for color and lustre were like the iron-tinted soil cut by the plough-share.

"Enoch, Enoch, aren't you going to get ready?"

"For what, dear?"

"For the wedding, of course."

"I am getting ready."

Enoch tossed away a huge spadeful of black, fibrous earth from the tree's roots. The swift rain whipped his eyes as he looked upward towards his sister.

"These roots must come out before I go."

Sararose laughed. "How absurd! Must roots always be pulled out before marriages?"

She shut the window, and went back to the agreeable process of arraying herself for the festivity. The garnet dress was laid upon the bed, with its soft, bright fluting of silk under the hem, the first silk *balayeuse* known to Elk Mountain, and a distinct source of joy to Sararose every time she heard its rustle around her ankles.

Sararose and Daddy together, inspired by a colored plate in a fashion journal, had devised a bib-like effect in filmy green for the bodice of the garnet gown. The same color frothed out again above Sararose's long, delicate hands and lighted up charmingly the green tints in her eyes. Sararose had thought the chiffon almost too startling in color and too flimsy to combine with cloth until assured by Alison that it was correct. Alison had, moreover, shown her, for her further strengthening, a party gown of June's with decorations of fur and

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lace. Ever since then it had been Sararose's dream to see herself whirling through a waltz in Richard Hollister's arms, with reddish fur outlining her bare bosom, and cobwebby lace draped bewitchingly and floating out behind her to impossible lengths over shimmering under-glints of sea-green.

When Sararose had first learned from Enoch of the approaching marriage, her horizon, that had for some weeks grown broader and brighter, shut down on her with leaden opaqueness. But now, with the New York winter glowing at the end of her vista, the world was illimitably large, and, somehow or other, Richard Hollister seemed woven into the strands of her dreams, or other young men, unmarried, with dented, delightful chins. Even Nixon, with the hatchet-face and light, unsmiling eyes, seemed a future possibility of pleasure.

Out-of-doors Enoch still struggled with the huge pine stump that must yield to him before he went to Camp Hollister. Through the dim swathings of rain his figure was exaggerated to almost heroic size, and might have stood in one of its momentary attitudes of fierce endeavor for "A Struggler with Destiny." The eloquent lines of his figure expressed mighty effort; the fixity of his face spelled hopefulness. In the vacancy of this rain-blotted field he seemed pitted against an invisible force. Enoch had made up his mind that the stump must be subdued. How cunningly mental and spiritual processes are abetted by the physical. He was pulling out by its roots something from his heart that had taken firmer seat there than the great pine in the soil. The pine had been growing some hundred years or more, laying hold on earth with its many

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hungry, clutching, underground fingers. This little, brief, intangible, sudden thing that had laid its fingers upon his heart—was it, too, the result of centuries of dark deliberation, of elemental pains?

He would have it out, like the roots of the tree, and he would go to Camp Hollister with a fearless front. The wind began to shuffle in the spruce-trees, and an expiring gust of rain blew like a torrent of tears across his face. A great raft of cloud floated apart overhead and let down a murky illumination from the still-veiled sun.

Spotty and Roan strained once more at the newly adjusted rope. They strained and panted.

"I declare to 't," chirruped Daddy, "she's be-ginnin' to start."

He took advantage of the interlude between showers to leave his shelter and approach the scene of conflict. Like many other disinterested persons, he liked to be in at the finish, when his sense of personal responsibility was in no measure diminished by previous non-participation. He flicked an ineffectual twig at Spotty's steaming flanks.

"Gee haw! Whew! We've done it, Enoch!"

The uprooted stump lay clawing up to the light. Daddy kicked some dirt into the yawning hole.

At this juncture the man from Camp Hollister rode in across the ploughed land and hailed Enoch. He handed him a letter from the colonel. Enoch wiped his muddy hands on his wrinkled, mud-colored trousers and opened the envelope. They wanted him to perform the ceremony. Minister not able to come. He must marry young Hollister and Alison? He must m—m—m— No, no. Fool that you are! The roots have been pulled out.

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"Yes," he said to the messenger. "Tell Colonel Hollister I will be there in season."

He explained to his father the message from the Camp.

"Bully for you!" exclaimed the old man, with pride. "And you will get a rattling fee!"

Enoch strode to the kitchen porch. He wondered if Alison knew.

CHAPTER XXIV

To Have and to Hold

ALISON did not know. Mrs. Hollister, clasping about Alison's neck the pearls, a gift from Richard's father, told her that Enoch Holme was to marry them. Alison gave a little start.

"There, my dear. These pearls have come unclasped again. As soon as you are in town you must go to Tiffany's and have the spring changed."

"They are beautiful," said Alison. "Enoch Holme!"

"And so becoming to you. Yes, Enoch Holme. He will do it very impressively, I am sure. You are not displeased?"

"Oh no. It is too late for that."

"For what? Oh, for the lace scarf, dear."

"No, dear; I will not wear the lace," said Alison, gently. "It is exquisite, but the tulle and the pearls and these flowers are enough."

"Alison, your dress is so plain," said Mrs. John, half reproachfully.

"She is a dream," said Mrs. Edward, in triumphant contradiction.

"It wouldn't do on any one else," June remarked in a low voice to her mother, as Alison's crêpy garment trailed down the broad stairs in front of them, "but on Alison it is fetching."

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Mrs. Hollister was satisfied, for June, on such matters, was acknowledged authority.

"Wait one minute, my dear. What is that red in your hair?"

"Please never mind," said Alison, patting Mrs. Hollister's hand and smiling a little. "They are the berries Mary picked in the rain."

Alison lifted her eyes but twice during the ceremony. The flowers, the people, the familiar room, with its unfamiliar air, she had no more consciousness of them than if she had been led blindfolded into the middle of night. With the first "I do" she lifted her eyes to meet the great, impersonal, religious gaze of Enoch's eyes, blue as a blue-stone. When she placed her cold fingers in Richard's hand, she encountered the brown, liquid look, and smiled ever so faintly. Some musicians began to play doomfully, and all was over.

Little Mary walked mournfully out of the drawing-room, unheeded by the jubilant congratulators. Quite calmly she preserved upon her face a curious smile as she passed Mrs. Ruddle in the hall. Mrs. Ruddle looked like a full-breasted tropical bird in a cloth gown that just missed being burnt orange to escape a rosy tan. "Where're you off to, midget?" Ysobel asked.

Mary laid hold upon herself heroically, and, still smiling the curious smile, shut the door softly behind her.

"It would not be nice for zem to know I am going to ely," she thought. She secluded herself in a broom-closet, where she sat among the dish-pans and comforted her passionate heart by abundant wails.

To Have and to Hold

"Oh, Alison, Alison! I never knowed being married was like zat! I never knowed! I never knowed!"

The clouds lifted during the wedding breakfast. Dandy and Fantine stood gleaming and curveting at the steps. Alison and Richard galloped away through a showery, glittery forest and under a racing sky.

"I feel good," said Fantine to Dandy.

"I feel happy," said Dandy to Fantine.

Book 11

CHAPTER XXV

Bodies and Souls

It had been a lonely winter for Enoch in camp, hemmed in by the spruce wilderness and white walls of snow. Now it was March, the winter skidding and hauling practically done, the new mill at a dead stand. There was no chance to get the logs down to the Elk Mountain mills till the river drives were on. Azzy was not in camp this winter, for Enoch's increased income as foreman and jobber had made it possible for the younger brother to commence his training at a school of technology. As for Enoch himself, what with Sararose's music, and her New York expenses, and Azzy's education, his own prospects of theological study and work among the churches seemed further than ever from being realized.

Enoch awoke early, as was his habit. The men about him were asleep, bunked on their rude cots, innocent of sheets and pillows. Some of them, by preference, lay on mere shake-downs of spruce branches, covered by sacking. Enoch, as he quietly dressed, looked about him on the faces of the sleeping lumbermen. Hard faces they were, lined, weather-beaten, gaunt, but the closed eyelids hid the shrewd, cautious look, the quiet penetration, that

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is characteristic of the men of the North Woods. Years of toil at lumbering, of life in the forest, had sealed their faces with the stamp of the craft. Every department of lumbering life requires this nicety of vision, this accuracy of calculation.

Through the dense, un lumbered forest the cruiser goes, in late autumn, when the hardwoods blaze among the sombre evergreens, or on snow-shoes in early winter, when he walks like an Indian over the deep, fresh-fallen snow, with all the little, flat fir-branches feathered and the juniper berries iced like confectionery. His must be the enduring frame to weather those wintry solitudes, the long vision to sight the distances from tree-top or ridge, the sturdy judgment to calculate on values in the virgin forest, the cheerful heart to whistle as he goes, pack-basket on back and glass in hand, a day's journey from the curling smoke of camp or lean-to.

The jobber in early autumn, again with long vision and sturdy judgment, maps out the log and tote roads for the winter camp, directing his choppers right and left as they "fall" the trees and clear the underbrush in preparation for the ice-packed travel-worn routes that are to intersect the wondering wilderness with man's traffic and industry.

Sawyer, skidder, and swamper, each in his vocation, with narrowed eyes and thoughtful lips, casts about him with forethought, calculating a tree's fall and its leap forward, building his skidway in the snow, or guiding his great horses, with the loaded sled behind, around the sharp curves. Even upon the lad who snakes the cull logs or the strays, with a horse and a chain, pulling in and out between the

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unbeaten ways of the wood, one may see this eager strain of the eyes, the look of eyes long habituated to unravelling leafy intricacies, fronting icy glares, and peering through the dust and steam and whir of the mill.

Enoch went the length of the bunks in the upstairs sleeping-room, looking in turn at each sleeper as he lay in the unconscious revelation of character that sleep or death vouchsafes. The trivial lines, the surface shades of expression, are smoothed away, and only the deep-seated manifestation of the soul remains. It resides not in line or contour, but more subtly, more broadly, more intangibly, speaks and gives not the lie. On this man's face was the half-smile of humorous contempt with which he viewed the world. On this man's the deep trouble of a nature in ferment. By day he was wag and good fellow. This man lay, his arm outside the gray blankets and his strong fingers clinched in a strenuous grasp of nothing. The pursed lips and gathered eyes denoted the same eager greed. Upon one face, a lad's, new to the camp, lay the shadow of the pathos of youth. Between the closed lids glistened the moisture of tears. The boy's thick-fingered, loving hands held each other under the potency of some yearning dream. Enoch stood last before him, and again his old passion for souls seized him. It was with him as strong, as elemental, as possessing, as that of sex or motherhood.

Souls! As he looked, each man's soul rose and stood, a vague, restless, wistful thing, by the sleeping body where was its dwelling. There were hands outstretched, but the feet were motionless and the soul's lips were mute. Slave or master?

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"Thou art mine," says Body, huskily, "and in my prison pent. When I choose, songful; when I bind, mute. I am for thee eyes and ears and feet. Thou steppest not forth from thy small chamber one day's journey till I do set thee free."

"Thou are mine," whispers Soul, "my slave to do my bidding, while I sit here in quiet upon my throne. All up and down the earth do I drive thee, and thou but fulfillest my will, not thine own. For my sins art thou scourged, and in the end will I cast thee aside like a worn-out garment."

"I do deny thee utterly," says Body, huskily; "when I lay me down for the long sleep, thou hast no longer habitation nor name. Thou flickerest out like a candle-flame when the candle is extinct."

"Thou art mine," whispers Soul. "Thou the candle and I the flame. Thou livest but for my sustenance. I burn thee and consume thee till thou art guttered out, and I have mounted from thy dead socket to the Source of Light."

Exults the fettered Soul, stretching upward still arms, a winged Niké chained to a pedestal of clay.

"Why, if the Soul can throw the flesh aside
And naked on the air of Heaven can ride—"

Souls of the insane, souls of the idiot, souls of the guilty, are ye indeed masters and the bodies slaves? It is certain that behind the vacant eyes of the idiot and his wide, glassy smile there resides a soul that is not idiot, but is slave to the body, and cannot speak. The soul of the idiot knows, understands, waits, and some day will stand side by side with the soul of the wise, and God shall call them broth-

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ers. So also has the maniac who raves within his cell a soul that is calm, for the soul does not go mad. How do such souls pass the long imprisonment, I wonder, till their hideous jailer opens to them the door? They are forbidden even to look out of windows, for the windows are flesh, and the jailer has the key. But sometimes when, in my walks abroad, I have passed such hideous cells, I fancy I hear a voice, little and clear, behind the empty laughter, or the awful scream, and I say, "It is the soul calling to her kind; but how shall I answer or go to her, for the walls are thick and the jailer has the key?"

Soul of the guilty, who hast sinned the sins of the flesh so that he is scared and blackened with the burning, are you master and not slave, or is it indeed your sins that have branded him with red-hot irons?

"Ah, no, no," says the soul of the fleshly guilty. "I have not sinned, nor am I branded with red-hot iron, no more than the soul of the idiot stares or the soul of the maniac gibbers. These things have befallen my flesh, but not me. I am so far within, so far within, that events cannot touch me, except the events clothed, like myself, with invisibility and immortality."

Invisible, immaterial, immortal, how may the soul sin? Yet that morning, in the gray of dawn, did the souls of the world call unto Enoch to be saved.

"Save us from the body of our sin," they cried.

And the souls of the sleeping lumbermen stood by their bodies, thin, white, wistful, innocent as babes, and opened their mouths, and spake unto

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Enoch. Their feet were set upon sapphire stones, and their bodies as the body of heaven for clearness. They were white for the harvest, as Enoch saw them.

"I will put in my sickle," he said. "I will reap and garner and take home to the Master."

But the time will come when the lumbermen awake and their souls slink back like whipped dogs to their kennels, their cries silenced. The lumbermen will eat and drink and make merry, wash their shirts and play cards, and tramp to their homes again, a roll of bills in their pockets and their clothes on their backs. Who says that the soul is master? Is it the body or the soul that the Master of Souls should teach? Enoch aspired to be a master of souls. In the deepest sense all that is not soul is body, the grosser forms of intelligence, the joys and sorrows that perish, yes, even the finite will and brain, they are flesh to that impalpable something, the Soul, which is pure.

So grieved the Apostle, understanding this truth, that the churches, preaching always the depravity of souls, distort.

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but that sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity. Unhappy that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The tent-maker preached the sinlessness of the Soul. The souls themselves stood up and preached to Enoch that winter dawn. He heard, but would

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not listen, for it was he who would fain preach to them.

"Save me from the body of this death," said the boy's soul, pointing with transparent finger to the sleeping head.

Enoch passed his hand over his forehead. The atmosphere hung heavy with unheeded voices. The intense yearning he felt was but spiritual magnetism unmated—an electric battery surcharged, with the current broken, a flame that the wind blew this way and that, for the fire-place was rude.

"Love, love, love," his nature called.

"Souls, souls, souls," he translated.

Now it must not be thought that there are no men in the world whose work it is to be preachers, nor that there are no souls to be saved. Enoch's soul must save itself, and may only save itself by obeying the inner call. To obey the inner call is to live out one's destiny, and to live out one's destiny is to save one's soul. To strangle the inner call, to balk one's destiny, is to lose one's soul. Life and soul not in harmony, soul the slave, not the master, the body of death, that is perdition. Life and soul in harmony, soul the master, the body of heaven, that is salvation. If one's calling is to save souls, then to save souls is to save one's self. It is a means, not an end. Enoch regarded it as an end. It was the means of his own salvation.

One's destiny may be to achieve failure. If by that failure self-expression is more sincere and full, then success is to be dreaded. As some one has wisely said, "I would rather fail in doing what I want to do than succeed in doing what I don't want."

Enoch's genius was for loving, strong, rich, pas-

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sionate, pure; loving was his soul's meat and drink. When he bent above the sleeping lumbermen, he loved them. When he yearned over Sararose's sins, he loved her. He would deny himself, starve himself, to feed a love. But, ah, what a warp had false doctrine given to the splendid web of this soul, so that passionate loving became passionate domination, and glorious pity became condemnation!

His love for Alison might have been the saving of his soul. The love of a man and a woman is religion, is God. ✓

"I know not thy soul from thy body,
Neither our love from God."

But that love was turned inward upon itself and became a consuming fire. He had it by the throat and was strangling it.

There is no such thing as forbidden love. The very expression is a contradiction.

Two things there are not—a guilty soul and a forbidden love.

Enoch forbade his own love, but it would not remain forbidden. He put murderous hands upon it, and did not know that he had murdered the body of heaven.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Buried Brook

HE went down the roughly built steps to the dog-room below, where signs of the last night's jollification still remained.

Saturday night at the camp is "Nigger-Night," for the same mysterious reason that fried pork is White Lion, and soup is Gul McGulligan, affectionate epithets of familiarity, by contrast with which the ordinary terms are cold and stilted.

The men's shirts hung around the central stove, where they had spread them to dry after Nigger-Night's tubbing.

Enoch stepped across to the cook-shanty. A huge fire glowed like a great eye in the dusky, low-browed room. He walked circumspectly, for behind the horse-blanket curtain Eli and his wife slept. The long oilcloth-covered table was set with the breakfast service, tin plates and cups, and great piles of bread, cut the night before, with superb disregard to fastidious requirement. The coffee stood mixed in the pot on the wood-pile, and two frying-pans held their heaps of sliced potatoes in readiness. At Enoch's plate, recognizable always by his own knife and fork, which he had brought with him from home, lay a letter. It must have arrived the night before, by mes-

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senger from Spriggs's Corners, after he had gone to bed. Enoch put some sticks into the fire, and made some coffee for himself in a small sauce-pan before he opened his letter. It was dawning outside, but the small, low windows of the shanty admitted little light, lambrequined as they were by icicles above and pillared by snow-banks below. By the light of a kerosene-lamp Enoch read his letter. It was from Thomas Mayhew, with whom he had been in occasional correspondence since the previous summer. The two men had deeply impressed each other. Now Mayhew wrote that a settlement house was being started in Little Quebec, a French-Canadian colony on the lower East Side, and they wanted a head-worker with some knowledge of the *patois*. There would be a small but stated salary, and he suggested that Enoch should enter upon the work.

"You know I am no believer in your theology," he wrote, "but it is only fair to add that our cause here on the East Side will be helped materially just now by a little orthodoxy, and I don't think you will harm it spiritually. Your manhood is what I want, your theology will save us with the bishop."

This was indeed a prospect to drink down with the morning's coffee. A chance for definite, practical work, for acquaintance with complex city conditions, and all the experience it would bring, a chance to have a standing in his own vocation. In fact, he saw opened up before him that for which every ambitious man longs, recognition by his equals. Without it, the consciousness of success is negatory. Enoch, who was a very proud man, told himself frequently that the opinion of the world mattered little. At those times when his lonely life sank deeply

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into his spirit, and when in his bunk at night he read books, or thought thoughts that were to be the substance of future sermons, he deemed it a humiliation to accept the world's estimates. But the pride of solitude soon crumbles before a little concrete recognition.

When Enoch stepped outside the shanty, the wonder of the dawn burst upon him with unaccustomed glory. It was a new revelation every day, from the dusky, low, warm, wood-smelling camp kitchen to the silver freshness of morning, sparkling among the evergreens.

As the man's figure appeared, the blue-jays began to scream, not unmusically, in expectation of breakfast, and a gray moose-bird flew one branch lower with keen anticipation.

The March snow was glazed like delicate blue porcelain with the chill of the night, and all the little trees were sugared with tinsel frost. The trunks and branches, veining already to shadowy purple or crimson with the blood of spring, were seamed with glittering runlets, frozen from the drip of the previous day's melting. The March had been a mild one in the woods—such feathery snows and balmy suns beneath the spruces as would have rejoiced the heart of a health-seeker.

A pale, clear beryl color was in the arch of the unclouded sky, except in the east, where between the trees the newly arisen sun burst with a flood of creamy light, a cataract overflowing in foam through the silhouetted spruce and hemlock that barred the low radiance. A sapphire sparkle of powdered gems glanced through the converging aisles. The crystal stillness was like a cool hand

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on a fevered forehead, was like the smile of a virgin babe.

The fortunate one who lives in the country, the wise and fortunate one who is awake and out-of-doors at dawn, will find himself heir to a treasure-house that has crumbled away and vanished before the late sleeper raises his heavy head from his pillow. Whether it be spring-time, with the madness of waking birds in the orchard, and the milk of morning mist washing the meadow; or summer, with the gossamer of spider-webs a-glisten, and day-lilies folded, gray with dew; or winter, and the red sun reflected in a myriad looking-glasses of ice and snow, it is all one—a revelation, a bath for the soul.

Enoch started off on snow-shoes for a long morning's tramp through his wilderness, if indeed snow-shoeing can be called tramping. Every form of locomotion has its peculiar quality, its communicated effect upon temper and temperament. The rollicking insouciance of a horseback gallop could never be induced by a bicycle spin. The brisk ardor of the bicycle is in every way different from the sweep and glide of the skates on ice and the remote exhilaration they bring. The dreamy languor of the canoeist, letting the world and all its sordidness slide away unregarded from under his velvet keel, could never be felt by the sailor, bounding, bird-like, with heart-leaps of unthinking joy. In snow-shoeing there is an uplift, a lightness, a magnificence, that ordinary walking knows not.

One is like a mortal cast in heroic mould, or like those who walk in dreams, lightly treading the air just above the heads of wondering earth-bound fellows. So the mood that snow-shoeing brings to a

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sympathetic temperament is one of uplift, of purity, of strength. Enoch followed an abandoned logging road, away and away up the winding mountain-side, miles of exquisite snowy solitude, of glitter and shimmer and shadow, a sky deepening to heavenly tints of blue, clouds blushing to palest rose, and beaten like cream above the crisp sparkle of blue snow, tree-patterns that lay pencilled like etchings, or applied like purple lace, as the sun mounted higher, and over all a bath of subtle, sharp, absolute silence, not the thick, mysterious silence of night, nor the gauzy, prickly silence of summer twilight, but the clear, intoxicating silence of a wintry forest dawn. There is in the world no silence like it.

Half-way up the mountain was a little lake, set lonely in its encircling alders and mountain maples, unvisited even in summer except by the occasional trapper or cruiser, boiling his kettle by its brink. The level surface was white with snow, across which a few deer-tracks went. The thin layer of topmost snow was lifted and blown by the wind in circles and semicircles of powdery dust, so delicate that they were like visible breath. Where the playful wind let the snow fall again, it made serrate leaf-edges and flowery scallops on the glaze underneath, like frosted bas-relief on silver. Here and there the snow had melted and frozen again smoothly in circular looking-glasses, that shone like polished metal.

The beauty of these woods to Enoch was their comradeship, a great heart that beat against his own. To be silent with them was richer than the most intimate speech. It was to be understood. Around a curve in the ever-curving road which he followed, striding with light, great steps over the drifts

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that piled it on either side, he came upon a glimpse through opened hemlocks of a little hill ahead, bare of trees, its rounded contour gentle as a woman's breast against the intense blue of the sky. Why did the thought of Alison Hollister come to him that moment? He had put aside his love for her. He had conquered it, he said. Nevertheless, he stopped at the thought, for it seemed to him that his heart stopped beating.

Below, in its delectable, snow-walled hollow, lay Witchhopple Brook, in summer the fairest of spirits, shy as a thought, wild as woman, and laughing wonderfully like a child who has not learned to speak. There is nothing in the realm of finite knowledge that thrills more with a sense of infinite mystery than the limpid laugh of the little child who sits and plays with a sunbeam, or his own pink toes. So, in summer, Witchhopple Brook laughed and laughed, and baffled all question. It ran away over the stones with white feet twinkling, and then, under the shade of great trees, and veiled with maiden-hair ferns, it made for itself a pool of meditation where it could lie and be amber-colored, and reflect the tallest trees and a bit of the topmost sky, and think about eternity.

All this was like a picture in Enoch's mind. He walked like a man with shut eyes, seeing only the gold-girdled pool where he and the woman had stood and the sunset leaf had fallen on her grape-vine hair. He reached the bottom of the ravine. There lay the little Witchhopple like a form under a winding-sheet. The sheets were drawn smoothly over its brown, dimpled lucency. It was whiteness, stillness, death!

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“ Oh, my God ! ”

His own life's joy lay there under the winding-sheet, the joy he had seen for a moment in the gold-girdled pool when it reflected the white cloud. There had been infinity in the pool. Hope is infinity, an endless road stretching splendidly away to the land beyond the west. Despair is a dead wall.

The buried brook was Enoch's joy.

“ Oh, my God ! ” he said again, realizing that moment two things: that he would love Alison Hollister to his life's end; that she was another man's wife. His snow-shoes sank a foot into the soft spring snow, just on the brink of the sheeted pool. The morning sun came down through the opening and spilled like rosy wine into the lap of the hollow, but the brook was still. The two Things stood beside him, like jailers beside the condemned. They had their gyves ready for the poor wretch who might imagine himself free. Enoch took out the worn and flattened pocket-book. He held the folded leaf in his hand, twirling it a moment. Then he bent down and impressed its image delicately and carefully on the sheet of the pool. As he did so, he heard, beneath its shroud, the little brook, purling and laughing by itself. It was the radiant, unbaptized soul of Alison that called to him.

“ I will go to New York,” he said. “ What have I to fear? I will save her soul, by the mercy of God ! ”

The mercy of God and his own desire were one.

The old maple-tree leered at him through its glistening fissure of a smile, as he climbed the ravine and left the hollow. Enoch smiled back benignly, remembering their conversation of—how long ago!

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Then the return walk began. But the return has never the charm of the setting-forth. It is the peach with the bloom rubbed off, the wine after the sparkle has effervesced, the secret that has been revealed.

The sun had mounted high into the blue, and the soft drip, drip of the ice from the branches filled the woods like mysterious footsteps. The writing on the snow had vanished, and not a twinkle of the life of the underwoods peeped from windfall or thicket. Far withdrawn in elemental reserve were the shy, wild animals—fox, rabbit, squirrel, wood-partridge, grouse, and deer—while the genial sun streamed through the bare purple branches, filtered down like gold dust between the dark-green balsam-fir and spruce, and melted deeper yet the narrow sled-ruts in the logging road.

The wild purity of the winter woods, their silver freshness, were in his spirit still when his train steamed into the blackness of the Harlem tunnel and finally pulled up in the great, multitudinous arcade of the Grand Central at night.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Rhinegold

THE winter had gone uneventfully enough for Sararose in New York. She lived in the same house with Rathbun's sister, who was a miniature-painter and a person of strenuous vivacity and frail physique. They were just east of Broadway, in the Forties, convenient for them both to studios, recitals, Carnegie and Mendelssohn Hall. The intricacy of city streets had resolved itself to some degree of simplicity. Sararose could now discriminate at a glance between a Columbus and Lexington car, and no longer let Sixth Avenue lead her astray from Herald Square. The Twenty-third Street crossing she took mechanically, and extras cried at night no longer dilated her eyes with vague horror. Shop-windows could be passed in a hurry, and she knew where to look for the musical notices in the daily papers. She had not had time or money for much amusement, but the theatre and opera had become familiar to her from critiques, bill-boards, and boarding-house talk. She was beginning to chafe under the bondage of her promise to Enoch, although as yet there had been no urgent temptation to break it. She had not observed any eager procession of cavaliers hastening to do homage at her door.

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Two or three callow musical geniuses had picked up acquaintance with her in the studio of her teacher, and one of them had even made bold to call upon her, his violin under his arm. He wore his hair rather long over a badly starched collar. By a merciful provision of destiny, it so happens that long hair generally performs the beneficent office of concealing imperfect linen.

Miss Rathbun disliked serious opera, being addicted to the Casino and Weber & Fields, whither she went occasionally with her brother when he happened to fall heir to other people's tickets. Rathbun and Nixon had a den together in the purlieus of Washington Square. Of society Sararose had little. Richard Hollister she had seen but once, when he called one evening with his wife. Busy people's hospitality, exuberant in intention during a summer of leisure, boils down during a town winter to one virtuous call and a sprinkling of cards. It is difficult to bring people into one's life who do not naturally belong there, and the kindest heart does not always go with the longest memory. The Hollisters had the sincerest purpose of befriending Enoch Holme's talented little sister, but after they had seen her safely settled in dull respectability on Fortieth Street, under Miss Rathbun's protecting, if eccentric, wing, their sense of duty was appeased.

Sararose found that loneliness was as possible in a big city as at the foot of Elk Mountain in the shadow of young birch-trees. The cumulative loneliness of a dozen weeks of empty evenings was on her to-night as she sat in her small room and heard from below the soul-rending voice of a young tenor. Next to her was a young man, with whom she had what is

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termed a "bowing" acquaintance. He was an assistant interior decorator for a Fifth Avenue firm.

On the other side of her was a small room, now vacant, the door of which stood open by day, displaying a swept but not garnished interior of boarding-house austerity. A colored print of a certain French actress, laughing over her shoulder, was the only superfluous article.

There came a tremendous knock at the door, which so took her breath away that her scarcely audible "Come in" had to be tried a second time before it was heard. Nixon entered, with concession to fashion in the shape of a scarlet necktie and white knit gloves. He was followed by Mrs. Ruddie, resplendent in sables and English violets, and the fierce-bearded Rathbun.

"Where is Margery?" demanded Nixon of the room at large, his eyes returning, with apparently accidental intent, to Sararose.

"She went out with a friend — I don't know where."

Sararose's loneliness was increased by the fact that Miss Rathbun and she were supremely indifferent to each other's comings and goings. She would have liked nothing better than to confide and be confided in to the last detail, for Sararose formed intimacies with all the engaging readiness of shallow natures. But Miss Rathbun, having been about the world a bit, and made many acquaintances that had had their day, had come to the point where one wearies of constantly new beginnings. Her rattling vivacity was more forbidding than the severest silence. Enoch's warm-hearted interest in his sister's

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affairs, irksome as it had often proved, now seemed a lost heaven.

Ysobel was struck by the lonely glitter of large, sea-colored eyes. At this same moment Nixon, for the first time, noticed the resemblance between her and Botticelli's women. So absorbed was he in this idea that when Ysobel asked him for the time, he replied, vaguely:

"It's gone, you know."

"What's gone, Nixie?"

"My Botticelli—my watch, I mean."

"Pawned again, I'll wager. Never mind—what are we here for?"

"For my sister," said Rathbun.

"No, for Miss Holme," said the painter, his pale eyes fastened upon the girl's exquisite head.

"Sararose, come with us to the opera," Mrs. Rud-dle added.

"We wanted to have Margery," added Rathbun, blandly, "because there was one more seat in our row."

"Because I wouldn't go along with all you men unchaperoned," Ysobel interrupted. "Sararose, will you come?"

The manner of the invitation had hardly been complimentary, but this was not the reason that Sararose hesitated.

"Where are your bonnet and shawl?" said Nixon, impatient for once, investigating vaguely the deceptive handles of the folding-bed.

"I'm not sure—I don't believe I'd better," answered Sararose, standing and toying with Ysobel's sable-tails. The perfume of the violets came to her like tropical persuasion.

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"Oh, but you must," said Nixon, coming to the other side of her, and beginning to think her less like a Botticelli, and more like a stupid little country girl. "Mrs. Ruddle refuses us, if you do."

"Impudence!" laughed Ysobel. "That's not the reason we want you. Go down on your knees to her, Kitty, and ask her like a gentleman."

"Thou blessed damozel!" burst out Rathbun, rolling upward his poet-eyes.

Sararose smiled, blushed, and gave Rathbun her hand as he rose.

"There's a very good reason why I can't go," she said, slowly, the last little flutter of resistance making a brave show.

"What—what?"

Sararose would have died rather than expose the mortifying reason—the promise to her sorrow-minded brother.

"It's the 'Rheingold' to-night," said Ysobel. "Have you heard it?"

"No," said Sararose, reluctantly, more than ever mortified at her ignorance of this as well as all other operas, and wondering if she could conceal such wholesale ignorance in the event of her yielding.

"Rhine maidens in the water, gnomes, underground barbaric music, profound allegory, splendid voices, Schumann-Heinck, Dippel, Bispham," said the painter-person, seductively.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Sararose.

"But we really mustn't linger. Dick will be swearing at us down-stairs."

"Is—is Mr. Hollister down-stairs?" asked Sararose, with lightning surmise and a leap at the heart.

"Yes"—Ysobel was equally adept at lightning

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surmises where *affaires de cœur* were concerned.
“You shall have him to yourself all the evening.”

“Wife gone, enjoying himself. As the man asked Willy R. at Atlantic City, ‘Here on pleasure or with your wife?’”

“For shame, Rathbun!” exclaimed Ysobel.
“Richard’s wife is Alison!”

“I beg pardon.” Rathbun’s tone became grave on the instant. “Alison stands alone.”

“Well?” Ysobel turned to Sararose.

“I’m afraid there is not time for me to dress.” Thus Sararose consented, and broke her promise to Enoch.

“The story of the Rhinegold,” said Richard to her, as they left the house—“do you know it?”

“No—tell me, please?”

“I’m rather vague about it myself. It’s the first of the cycle of the ‘Nibelungenlied.’ I don’t care for much besides the voices and the orchestra, I’ll admit.”

“What is the Rhinegold?”

“I’m blessed if I know. The Rhine maidens guarded it, down in the water—apples of the Hesperides and that sort of thing. Made a ring out of it. First Alberie got it, then Wotan, then the giant—I forget his name. Brought everybody trouble, but every one wanted it. You literary chap, explain it—eh, Nixie?”

Nixon hated explanations. They were slow poison to him, but he could not resist Sararose’s appealing eyes.

“It’s allegory—Rhinegold—gold, gold, hard and cold—the ring—its power increased to the sixth degree, with all that the skilful use of gold makes pos-

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sible. Alberic, the Nibelung — who stands for the sordid crafty passion for gain — outwits the elements, the Rhine maidens mysterious. Barter all love, all possibility of human happiness, for Rhinegold."

"Look out for the car, Nixon!" Rathbun jerked him back from before the Broadway cable.

"They're having a great turnout at the Empire to-night," remarked Ysobel. "It's the *première* of Arburton's new play."

Richard and Ysobel stopped to speak with some ladies who got out of a carriage before the theatre.

"I saw it in London last summer. It's very pretty."

"Pretty!" exclaimed the daughter. "Why, mamma, it's pitiful, horrible!"

"Mrs. Ruddie, how well you're looking!" exclaimed the elder lady, with scarcely veiled hostility.

Nixon got the place by Sararose's elbow, continuing the explanation in his own peculiar fashion, watching the currents come and go in the girl's sea-pool eyes.

"So it comes to them all—the same problem, love or gold, gold or love. Wotan makes the sacrifice, love for gold, and the face of the earth is darkened. Erda, our mother-earth, the elemental humanity, the good old animal in us, warns him—"

"How does it end?"

"Fasolt, the giant, heaps Freya's image as high in gold as she is in life, and lets her go. And the ring fills the chink that hides the last glance of her eyes."

"But it doesn't end so," said Mrs. Ruddie to Sara-

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rose, as they crossed the street. "Fasolt is killed by his brother, and loses both love and gold."

"Love and gold!" laughed Richard. "Both are worth having. What's the use of deciding between them?"

They went in at the Fortieth Street entrance, and began climbing the long stairs.

"You don't have to," retorted Nixon, with a vicious emphasis on the pronoun.

"Nor you," said Richard, lightly. Nixon had his hand at Sararose's elbow, conventionally "assisting" after the proper fashion of escorts. "Here is love and gold for you, all in one." He looked smilingly at the girl's wealth of ruddy gold hair.

"I meant to tell you," said Rathbun, "that she would make a capital figure for your mural composition."

"I have found it out for myself," said Nixon, listlessly.

They threaded the aisle and took their seats. They could look down on broken semicircles of galieried rows, dotted full of the black-and-whiteness of humanity in the mass. It was just before the curtain, and the house was in twilight. Up underneath the roof and opposite them hung the clusters of electric lights, like little burning apples.

A sharp-featured woman in a plaid waist behind them was contesting her seat with a husky German Jew.

"These family-circle people are a study," said Richard to Sararose, in a low voice.

"You needn't flee. I'm a family-circeler," said Rathbun. "It's my natural habitat."

The twilight made a sudden drop to night, stirring

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and fluttering about them ceased, and away down in the centre of the house bluish mists began to roll upward. In the vague understream three shapes glimmered and floated, fish or mermaidens, with waving arms and slim, opaline bodies. The music streamed out in waves of sound, and then the first Rhine maiden sang. Sararose wanted to ask a hundred questions. She was bewildered, entranced. Laughter that ebbed and flowed with the music, the Nibelung's passionate, sordid basso, and elemental sense of the causes of things revealed, and a toying with primal passions. The last glittering, laughing waterthing had slipped away, the Rhinegold gleamed and was stolen, and the cloudy curtain fell and rose, and slowly the flowery mead by Valhalla blossomed to golden splendor. There was no intermission, a restraint under which Richard visibly chafed. He scribbled little notes and comments on the back of an envelope, and passed them to Sararose. If he had been in a box he would have whispered, but he respected the religious gravity of the family circle.

When Wellgunda sang:

“Denn was nur lebt will lieben,
Meiden will keiner die Minne,”

he wrote: “Do you understand? ‘Whoever lives will love; no one will fly from love.’ The naughty little Rhine maiden was cruel. Don’t be cruel, too.”

Sararose was swept along on a sea of tumultuous sound. The acting and the spectacle dazed, but the music intoxicated. She was not yet sufficiently sophisticated to enjoy the theatrical complement to mere music. The measured movements of the actors,

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their unaccountable silences and pauses, the rhythmical embraces, all were to her distorted, unintelligible.

"Isn't Leoge superbly Frenchy?" wrote Richard, to the immense disgust of a trio of æsthetic school-girls, who heard the scratching of his pencil, and looked round, with disapproval on their superior young faces. "The twitch of his mantle, and the airy legs!"

He was singing the delicious praise:

"Für Weibes-Wonne und Werth."

"A woman's wonder and worth—he has sought the wide world over, but there is nothing to equal a woman's wonder and worth."

The curtain fell to the thoughtless applause that drowned the last crashes of the orchestra. The school-girls and the sharp-featured woman hissed the applauders to silence. Then the singers were called out, singly, in couples, and rows. People began to put on their hats, ladies hunted up their gloves and handkerchiefs under the seats, the school-girls put away their beloved opera-glasses, and with a long breath of mixed delight and fatigue Sararose awakened to the crowd.

"Well?" asked Richard.

"I should like to shut my eyes and hear it all over again."

"Let's go and eat," said Ysobel, briskly. "Wagner gives me that gone feeling."

"Remember," said Richard, as they descended the endless iron stairs, "this is only the prologue. The best is yet to come."

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"Ah," sighed Sararose, vaguely, wondering if he meant to take her again.

"The best is yet to come," he repeated, unaware how tender his voice was and how much more it meant than he did. Sararose was a pretty child, and he liked her misty, sea-green look. There was in it the appeal and the mystery that belong to musical, pleasure-loving eyes. They were different from the firm, brown candor of Alison's eyes. Richard could have said with Wotan, "Wandel und Wechsel." He had reached the point where he enjoyed a little change. They mounted the steps under the awning to the little chop-house, familiar to the profession, just off Broadway. The place was crowded, as it is generally at that hour. They had either to separate or to wait the chance of an empty table. They chose the former alternative, and Richard promptly decided that Sararose and Nixon should be the couple to dine *à deux*. He was too recently married to wish to be seen with a beautiful girl at midnight over a bird and a bottle. There was no knowing whom they might run up against at Nocq's.

"Here's a table for two, Nixie," he said, pulling out a chair for Sararose, and standing back to let the pair pass him to the little table by the window.

Richard was man of the world enough to manage a little situation adequately, but Ysobel checkmated him.

"We three," she said, with one of her most artless looks, and plucked Rathbun by the sleeve. A waiter had three places ready where a lonely fourth was just at the finish with Camembert and Tokay. Rathbun recognized by the limpidity of Ysobel's smile that she had a motive, and respected it by obey-

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ing her. Nixon somewhat resented Ysobel's masterfulness. At other times he had found it piquant. It was partly sheer mischief, partly her inborn instinct for a little *liaison*, that induced Ysobel's strategy, which occupied but a moment. Richard found himself divested of his overcoat by the officious waiter of the little table.

"I like to see them together," Mrs. Ruddle remarked.

Nixon regarded critically Sararose's shining head, bell-buoyant, crowning her slender figure in its *fleur-de-lis* swathings, and Richard, opposite, with the massive, shapely brow and the smiling, dimpled chin. His hair, where his hat had pressed, made a splendid waving line across his forehead.

"They're distinguished. Do you see those stage-folk stare?" Rathbun said.

"The stout one is talking about Zaza hair." Nixon sat back in his chair, disgusted.

"It's Dick that takes the little one's eye," said Ysobel, interpreting their lips cleverly, while she douched her oysters with various condiments.

Richard did not cry long over spilled milk, but rapidly fell into humor with the situation; Sararose and champagne were a not half-bad combination, and under the unwonted influence of wine and other strange things her spirits effervesced like the Veuve Clicquot she was drinking. She said wittier things than she had ever before known she was capable of. Repartee flew back and forth like sparkles in the wind. All through the room came little gusts of mirth and the tinkle of glasses.

They leaned elbows on the little table, and looked across into each other's eyes, and the air seemed vi-

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brant with intimacy. Sararose did not quite remember her own words which she had just spoken, but they must have been pleasing, for Richard laughed back; nor was she distinctly conscious what he was saying, for once, when she thought she had listened, he said, "Don't you think so?" and she replied "Yes," quite unaware of what had preceded. Then he laughed, and she, not knowing what he laughed at, laughed too, and he touched her hand that lay on the table, and said, "It's a compact, then?"

Laughter came now more easily than speech. She floated up and down irresponsibly, and through a sort of haze came a voice far away that must be Richard's. Now some one buttoned her coat, and she was waving off somewhere, floating up and down, dimly conscious of buoyant feet that would not touch ground, and a door that seemed miles away and then brushed her arm abruptly.

They had only a few steps to go to the familiar boarding-place. She was aware of a very firm hand on her arm, and wondered what she was saying and if any one knew that her feet could not find the earth.

"Here we are," said Mrs. Ruddle. "I'll wait below while you and Kitty go up with her."

In the little unoccupied room next Sararose's a light burned.

"You will sleep well to-night," said Richard to her as she sank upon the couch.

"Yes, yes, I am sleepy," she answered, with strenuous effort.

"Don't be in a hurry to get up in the morning," advised Rathbun, in a brotherly fashion, as they closed the door behind them.

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One of the pleasing features of the first stage of intoxication is its subjectiveness. The swimming feet and the hazy vision are known to the subject alone.

"A little exhilarated," remarked Rathbun.

"It's mightily becoming to her," said Richard, as they rejoined their friends in the hall.

The occupant of the neighboring room was awake and watching. When the voices had ceased and the front door was closed, he knocked imperiously on Sararose's door. He had to knock a second time, more imperiously, more loudly, before he was answered.

"Come in," she said, weakly, too lazy to wonder who her late visitor might be.

Enoch entered and saw his young sister half fallen across the couch, her bright hair dishevelled, streaming over her shoulders from under her hat, her fingers vainly struggling to unfasten the clasp of her belt.

The sight of him was like a cold wave broken over her head. She sat upright. The unevenly anchored hat, with its weight of purple velvet, fell unnoticed to the floor.

"Sararose!" he exclaimed, in stern amazement.

She fell forward and clasped his knees. "Don't be angry with me. Don't be angry," she wailed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Tribunal

ENOCH drew her upward to her feet, neither roughly nor tenderly. The aloofness of his touch made Sararose shiver with apprehensiveness. He had not touched her so since a certain time she vividly remembered, when, a little child of seven, she had followed a circus down the road to Saranac. He had found her trotting along in the dust, barefoot and hatless, her red hair flying, and had led her home by the hand in silence. Sararose remembered now how she had felt the reproof in his fingers, and had slipped her hand out of his, petulantly, only to have him resume his grave, gentle grasp — a wood-god leading home a truant dryad. Now she remembered that invincible, prophetic grasp as Enoch raised her to her feet. He was not in the mood to be touched by her suffering. His revulsion of mind from her wrong-doing was too complete. There would be an awful, restrained denunciation, and then—what? The wrath, the contempt, the denunciation she might live through and even be happy the next morning, but what else? There might be more permanent consequences. Enoch was given to demonstrating the theory of consequences. It was one of his most unpleasant theories, and one

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the application of which seemed too often under his personal control.

He met his sister's melting, frightened gaze with stern candor.

"Enoch, I have been doing nothing. I—I—"

He drew her to the oval glass that hung upon the wall above the cretonne-covered chiffonier.

"Look there!" He towered behind her, with both hands on her shoulders, and their eyes met in the queer mirror. "Look at yourself!"

The flushed cheeks, tumbled hair, and heavy eyes wore the aspect of guilt. Sararose would have turned her face aside, but Enoch held her.

"I've looked enough," she said, childishly. "Let me go."

"Do you like it?" he asked, gravely, wanting to melt the hardness of her mood to passionate contrition. "Is it my little rose of the mountains, my innocent sister?"

Sararose felt that underneath the velvet pathos of Enoch consequences lay thorny and menacing, so she was not melted.

"It's late—I was sleepy," she said, tartly; "I was sleepy, Enoch. Of course I am not looking as I do at nine in the morning."

Sararose picked up her hat languidly and sat down on the couch. She folded her hands in patience, as if waiting for a tiresome caller to go. She wondered if Enoch had heard the men's voices, if he had learned from the landlady anything about her—in fact, she wondered what he did know of her evening's experience. It was the part of wisdom to be silent, and so far she had not committed herself. What would he say next? How angry he would be if he knew!

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"Where have you been this evening, and who was with you?"

All the velvet had gone from Enoch's tone, and his eyes were slate-colored. She knew the color and all it implied. At the question her heart gave a great jump, as if some one had suddenly knocked. Was there to be no loophole for evasion? The evening's pleasure grew hideous as she reviewed it through the medium of those slate-colored eyes.

"I went out — out to a concert. Mr. Hollister and some others were with me." Enoch knew that Sararose lied, and she knew that he knew, but somehow to frame the truth seemed physically impossible.

"Was Mrs. Hollister with you?"

"No."

"Who were the others?"

"Mr. Rathbun, Mr. Nixon, and Mrs. Ruddle."

"Mrs. Ruddle?"

"You remember her. She is a friend of the Hollisters." It is all going very smoothly, thought poor Sararose, somewhat mistaking the quiet tenor of Enoch's question.

"I remember her. She danced in breeches on the lawn."

Sararose wanted to laugh, but she knew that it would make her brother furious at her flippancy, so she clinched her thin fingers tightly in her palms and looked solemn.

"She was the only other woman?"

"Yes."

"Where was this concert?"

"At—at Carnegie."

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Enoch looked round the room, picking up a programme from the table beside him.

"Is this the programme?"

"No, no," cried Sararose, sharply. Enoch looked at her coolly and perused the sheet.

"Metropolitan Opera House," he said, aloud. "Grand opera, under the direction of—"

"One of my friends left it here," interpolated Sararose, feebly.

"'Rheingold! Friday evening, March 12th.' That is this evening," said Enoch, as he gave the paper a contemptuous toss aside. "Where is the programme of the concert at Carnegie?"

Sararose cast ineffectual glances at the floor.

"I—I don't see it. I don't know, Enoch."

The slate-colored eyes took aim at the blue libretto thrown wide open on Sararose's littered desk.

"'Das Rheingold,' too," he smiled, a little grimly. Sararose quivered before the grim smile.

"It wasn't wicked," she wailed. "Oh, Enoch, they begged me to go so hard." Then the Rhine-maiden laughter began to sing itself to her, and after that she hardly heard.

"To—the concert at Carnegie," said Enoch, with the mechanical insistence of a hammer.

"To the—opera." Sararose gulped out the words as Enoch meant she should, and fell to weeping, while the little Rhine maidens still laughed, gleefully, hatefully.

"It wasn't wicked; it was beautiful. And they wanted me to go so much; they begged me so hard."

"The insistence of a crew of worldly fellows—none of them your particular friends, are they, Sararose?"

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“No.”

“—And a—a—light-minded woman had more weight with you than your brother’s wishes”—Enoch had a euphemistic way of calling his commands wishes—“and your own principles.” He paused for an answer. It was torture to Sararose to be pulled through the keyhole of Enoch’s conscience. If he would only come out with consequences and have done with her. But that was not his method. He believed himself to be gently leading an erring one to a realization of her wrong, so that the consequences, even though personally wielded by him, should be regarded rather in the light of inevitable providence than personal penalty.

“I am waiting for an answer to my question,” said Enoch, while Sararose, her brain dazed under the blended influence of past pleasure and present misery, and reeling with sleepiness, tried hard to recollect what the question had been. She pressed her fingers against her throbbing temples to hush the rise and fall of laughing voices.

“I don’t know what you asked me. I’m so tired. Let me go to bed, and I’ll tell you all about it in the morning.”

“Poor, foolish, tired, sinful child!” Enoch wanted to say, and to fold her to his heart in a big-brotherly, restful embrace. Sararose, too, wanted to lay her head against his shoulder and to cry herself to sleep, forgiven by him. If either one had yielded to the impulse of the heart, how different would have been the history of that night.

But Enoch, bitterly hurt as he was, thought Sararose, for her soul’s good, should feel something of the bitterness and shame which he vicariously en-

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dured for her. Fresh from the lonely white woods and lonely white thoughts of a life of service and self-denial, he seemed now to breathe the hectic air of self-indulgence and perdition. If he had tried, he could hardly have rid himself of his terrific sense of responsibility, and he did not try. To feel responsibility for another's happiness does not entail such harrowing as to feel responsibility for another's righteousness. To mould a human soul to one's own ideal is a task no human soul can undertake and remain blameless.

So Enoch crushed the impulse of his heart, took Sararose's wrists in the same godlike grasp, and set himself anew to the task of her humiliation. Now he had reached his usual question of Why? He was probing for motive.

"Why?" repeated Sararose, tired out and indifferent, at last, to whatever should follow. "Why did I go? Because I wanted to."

"You wanted to?" Enoch dwelt on the word to emphasize its hopeless inadequacy.

"I wanted to, I wanted to," almost shouted mild, little Sararose, maddened beyond endurance and rising on the wings of her audacity. "I wanted to live my own life and not yours, Enoch."

She walked to the mirror, and commenced unhooking herself desperately. Enoch, aroused to personal wrath by this last fling, followed her and wheeled her around.

"Your principles?" he asked, sternly. Sararose tossed her ribbon stock into the top drawer, and pulled out with a vim her few remaining hair-pins.

"Principles? I have none," she said, and laughed up into the slate-colored eyes. Her heart smote her

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at the same instant, for she knew that the words cut Enoch like a knife, and his gray face and the deep lines told of the suffering already. His silence filled her with dread. He would surely ask her to explain, and she only meant that she had no principle against the opera.

Enoch took his seat again, not looking at her. She knew he was forming some dreadful resolution. She had half a mind to go down on her knees before him and ask his forgiveness. Then he spoke. Ah, she could never forget those few curt words and the sense of doom they brought.

"Pack your trunk! We will leave New York in the morning. If you have no principles, I shall keep you where you will be under my protection."

"Leave New York? Not to return?" Sararose quivered, all her audacity and bravado deserting her.

"Not to return," said Enoch, "as long as I have guardianship and the money to keep you."

"Enoch!" It was easy now to fall on her knees and pour forth a flood of mingled tears, protestations, and humility.

"You are not listening to me," she moaned.

"I have made up my mind."

"Oh, but you do not know. You are spoiling my whole life."

"I am saving it for you."

"My voice—my music. You do not know what my teachers say. What can I do up there? Oh, Enoch!"

Again he was lifting her to her feet, more pitiably this time, and telling her to go to bed.

"To-morrow morning? Not to-morrow morning!"

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A little thought of relenting came to Enoch. The shade of it crossed his face. Not a commutal, but a postponement of the return, for it would also play havoc with his plans to return immediately. He paved the way for himself by giving his sister opportunity for more agony of contrition.

"Sararose, if you had met me differently, if you had not seemed to glory in your wrong—"

"You would have forgiven me," she caught at the possibility, eagerly; "you would not have made the punishment so great."

"It is not punishment," said Enoch, gently, disarmed by her humility, "it is simply result."

From the bottom of her soul, how Sararose hated Results, Consequences!—those large, impersonal forces that yet seemed puppets at her brother's bidding.

"I did not mean what I said. I did not know; I was confused—the supper, the—" She realized what she was saying, and stopped, horrified. Enoch did not know about the supper. If the supper, too, were to be reckoned with, what form would Consequences take? But the look of horror did not escape the slate-colored eyes.

"What supper? This time speak the truth. Tell me all."

Sararose took a heroic resolve. Perhaps, after all, Enoch would relent if he saw that she spoke the truth bravely.

"We had a little supper—"

"I know, I know, at last!" cried Enoch. He drew Sararose's small face nearer, holding it between his great hands. The suffused and heavy childlike eyes dropped before his steady gaze.

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"Wine!" cried Enoch, with supreme, painful brevity. "No, no, Sararose, I will not listen to you. No, no, say no more. I am glad I did not come too late, if indeed it is not already too late."

He pushed her from him, gently, but with terrible reproof.

"Good-night."

He did not kiss the poor, pleading, tear-stained, distorted little face. She tried in vain to frame "good-night," but only a sob came. She threw herself face downward on the pillow as he left the room.

Sararose had just one thought. Something had come to her that was too terrible for endurance.

"I cannot stand it," she moaned.

The unendurable things are always those that endure. Their enduringness, despite ourselves, make us cry out in anguish, "It is unendurable."

"I cannot stand it," we say, because we must, and can. Sararose suffered the most exquisite torture from reviewing the whole interview, and realizing that here or there had been her opportunity for staving off doom. Here or there Enoch would have relented; here or there she herself had precipitated Consequences. Exquisite torture of those who look back to see how easily safety could have been purchased! Sararose had never heard of the Aeschylean motive of infatuation nor of Omar's fatalism. Nevertheless, she felt herself blindly hurried along, a leaf in the wind, by a force behind her she neither saw nor understood.

"I cannot stand it, I cannot stand it," she moaned, when suddenly a light gleamed through the black wall of her anguish.

"I will not stand it," she cried.

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She sat up and stopped crying. After a few moments of self-restraint she went to the glass, and, leaning forward, minutely examined her face. The pitiful look of it brought the tears to her eyes again; then she smiled at her face's reflection resolutely as she dressed her hair and washed.

When she had finally arrayed herself for out-of-doors she looked at her little alarm-clock, ticking off its imperturbable life on the top of the mantel bed. It was seventeen minutes after two. She extinguished the gas, and stealthily crept down stairs and out into the night. It was night in a great city, at an hour she had never before known or imagined outside of her bed. Up brilliant, deserted, mysterious Broadway she walked, with a beating heart. She knew where she was going and she was not afraid. She thought she was not afraid. But the future was dark before her as the city was that night, punctured here and there by staggering lights. The lights made the darkness greater. She was in that mental state when the beating of one's heart repeats itself in the ears and fills the world with confusion, when the sound of one's own steps strikes the senses dully like another's who walks beside. Several times Sararose glanced behind her to see if she were followed. Her thoughts were so loud that they, too, seemed like another's, and became audible to the hearing. The cool night air and the plunge to an audacious resolution had brought back to her the memory of the compact with Richard Hollister across the table at Noeq's.

"Come to me when you want me," he had said.

She wanted him now.

CHAPTER XXIX

Enoch Thinks

As Enoch entered his room, the laughing actress on the wall greeted him over her bare shoulder. He strode across with an exclamation of disgust, pulled down the picture, and let it fall, pink-bonneted face downward, on the floor. Then he sat himself in the little cane-bottomed chair, too small for the breadth of his frame, and thought. He had been in a fury of disappointment, indignation, over Sara-rose. He thought it righteous indignation, because he thought she had sinned. That she, his sister, had fallen so low, hurt him to the core. That she could, that she wanted to, that she dared, that she had! Above all, that she had dared! It must be remembered that to Enoch opera and a wine-supper meant not the first step, but a far-down step, on the road to ruin. He could have been very tender over an abandoned woman, utterly abandoned, but kinship and the possibility of redemption made him stern. Insulted pride seared his brain, for Sara-rose had dared to break a promise, wilfully to flout his known principles. Fear for her went like ice to his finger-tips. Pity for her, shame for himself, burned dry his throat. Pride, anger, humiliation, swung, swayed, and sucked at him, till he knew not

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how time went in the blackness of the maelstrom. Out of the black pool he had a vision, a circle of pines, a bright head against a green-hued lamp, the breath of balsam-fir. That was salvation. What matter that a wide, new world was shut away from him, that a door just opened was slammed in his face? Even the voice of Alison would not have been potent to keep him in New York. The soul of Sararose must be led back from the gulf. Sararose in Elk Mountain; Enoch in New York—the cruelty of this would have been impossible. They would go back together, and together build up what had fallen.

Pride, anger, shame, fear ebbed away. Only pity and love remained. The memory of the sweet, stained face came to him. He would go to her, comfort her if she waked, or kiss her sleeping brow. How easy it is for the conqueror to offer comfort! He went to her room. The mantel-bed stood unopened, maintaining its cumbersome semblance. The blue libretto lay spread out upon the floor. The hat, with its hyacinth masses, was gone.

Gone! Sararose gone, fled out into the night, into the city. The deep horror of night-engulfed city struck to Enoch's heart. He looked down for a minute from the little high window over the irregular roof-lines, and below at the converging lanes of darkness beaded by street lights. As far away as he could see, the city wore its necklace of light, like serpent eyes around Medusa's neck.

"O Hesperus, thou bringest all good things." But night—that same night that brought good things to a thousand, that was a kind, dark, brooding mother, that was holy rest and protection—was to Enoch the Mother of Evil. He knelt.

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“Out of the depths do I cry unto Thee, O my God, save her!”

It was twenty minutes of three. He went down into the street.

“There was a slip of a gyrul went by, wid a face on her like a dish of tay, the crathur.”

Enoch could scarcely wait for the big policeman's words.

“My sister! Auburn hair, and a violet-colored flower in her hat?”

“She went by torrads the river, wid a bit shawl on the head of her.”

“No, no!”

Enoch was making off again, but the policeman laid a burly hand upon him.

“Wait a bit, sor. You're that onaisy you do be ating me head off. I'll tiliphone to the Tinderloin station. They may hev taken her up, perhaps, if she was afther losin' her way or a bit dishtracted-like.”

He threw these suggestions out tentatively, for he coarsely grasped the situation — brother from the country, girl going wrong, a row—

“They do sometimes take to the river, sor,” he called after Enoch.

“Clean crazy,” he said to himself, as he watched Enoch's furious pace.

“There do be a power o' misfortunate crathurs in this 'ere world.”

He was a kindly policeman, but he had not been on the corner when Sararose floated up lonely Broadway in the violet-colored hat.

To the river Enoch went. The river! He had put upon her more than she could bear. He knew

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it now. Nothing upon earth except this would have convinced him of his own severity. He had driven Sararose to—the river! My God! Did she find return to the mountains worse than such a death? Little Sararose, had she such passions, such desires, such intensity? Nothing can prove to some people the intensity of other people's natures but extremity of action. Their absorption in their own natures makes others pale to them. Enoch began to stand in awe of Sararose, an awe he had never before felt of any human soul.

The river swept dark and forbidding at the end of the street. Oh, river of death, what pitiful lives have gone to you at the last! In London, in Paris, in New York—poor dregs of lives that have spilled themselves out on the merciless waters of the river. They have opened to receive you, those merciless waters, swirled you down and washed you up again like sea-weed on the shore.

A woman plucked Enoch by the arm. He had not seen her emerge from a neighboring alley, nor heard her steps. At his sharp cry she cowered.

"For the love of God!" she whined. Enoch looked at her, and she drew closer. "Ain't you awful tired walking?"

"So that's what you are!" he exclaimed. The horror was too great to be endured, but the gauntness of her face appalled him. "Don't touch me!"

She waited like a dog, while he drew a dollar bill from his pocket.

Ah, no, no! Sararose could never have gone to the river. She could never have walked the same street with this woman. The profanity of the thought drove away Enoch like an arrow from the bow. He

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wheeled east again, with the woman at his heels. The dollar bill, clinched and crumpled in his hand, he had forgotten, till he heard the woman's voice, but not what she said. He could not touch her nor speak to her, but he dropped the bill on the pavement, then hurried on. Again he heard the poor, spent voice. He had wronged her by such contempt. He stopped while she gained his side.

"Ef ye're lookin' fer a gal," she gasped, "mebbe I kin help ye."

"I have lost my sister," said Enoch, sternly. "Have you seen her, woman?"

"You ain't from the Tenderloin, sure," answered the woman, a bit flippantly. "My God, you needn't look at me so! I'm not groggy. I'll tell you the truth, so God help me! I've been doing this here water-front all night. I had a mind to step off myself, but this 'll keep me going awhile longer. No, there ain't been no one here but my nibs, or I'd hev seen her. Lordy, you do look fazed, though!"

"Where is she?" demanded Enoch.

"Ef she's a gal, and she's run away from a good home," said the woman, bitterly, "there's a man in it. Go and give him my love, and shoot him!"

The woman's outrageous laugh echoed in Enoch's ear long after she had disappeared down an alley.

"A man in it. Go and shoot him!" Enoch found a corner apothecary and a directory. The yellow night clerk eyed with suspicion the big, tawny man with the terrible eyes, who hurled in and out of the shop like vengeance.

CHAPTER XXX

The Frightful Thought

THE porter and elevator-boy had food for reflection that night at the Plantagenet, the big apartment-house on Central Park West. No one can deny these officials the privilege of piecing together such detached and limited circumstances as fall under their observation, and making of them a coherent and expansive whole. To do this is one of their chief vocations, and there are those who attain a high degree of skill in supplying deficiencies in records.

At an hour considerably after midnight young Hollister and his two "gemmlen frien's" arrived, and were carried up in the elevator by a wooden-faced, but interested, elevator-boy. Not long after these two departed, the "lady-frien'" rang a timid bell, and was also swung upward to the Hollister apartment. The phenomenally slow pace of the elevator gave the wooden-faced boy purposed opportunity for several observations.

"Mis' Hollister ain't home," he remarked, with discreet astuteness.

"She done say muffin'," he reported later to the janitor, "but she 'peart mighty scart-like."

Richard Hollister found himself in the most difficult situation he had ever faced. To put Sararose

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in an easy-chair before the flickering gas-logs, to dry her tears with his own soft linen handkerchief, to revive her fainting strength with a hot brew, to close carefully the doors connecting the library with the rest of the apartment—all this was easy and natural; but what next?

“You won’t let Enoch take me back to Elk Mountain, will you?” her violin voice fluted.

She was somewhat comforted by the opiates of material and spiritual sympathy at Richard’s command, and was by this time much more at ease than he.

Then the battle was waged between the four walls of that modern, conventional library, a battle with more at issue than the mere result, with more persons involved than the two who fought, more forces engaged than either one guessed. Sararose fought for her life desperately, passionately, unreasoningly. Her life was art and freedom, but she knew not her strength nor what weapons she held. The man fought for her honor against himself. Her inexperience was more potent than his knowledge.

“You say Enoch is like iron. I know it as well as you do, little girl. What can I do to help you?”

But Sararose, as passionate for freedom as her brother for righteousness, or Hollister for pleasure, could not, would not, understand. Because she wanted a way out, there must be a way out. And Richard was the god to provide her the way out.

“Don’t you see, Sararose? What will the servants say when they find you here in the morning? What will my wife say when she comes home?”

As Richard paced the room, hardening himself to Sararose’s appeal, she followed him up and down, with timidity, with abandon, like the little thirsty

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animal that follows the smell of water. When he stood still, scowling, his mouth fixed, playing with the tassels at the window, she stood beside him. When he threw himself into his chair by the fire, she was on the floor at his feet.

"What will Enoch say when he comes, when he knows you are here?"

The bright gas flames flickered on her hair, and made a burning aureole around her pretty head. They shone through the thin hands she held out to Richard.

"He will not come, he must not know," she shivered, lifting to the man that look he could not withstand.

Richard impulsively drew her head to his knee, and laid his hand upon it. He was a brute to have steeled himself against the soft creature's unhappiness. He could not bear to see suffering. He was tender-hearted to a criminal degree.

"No, no, he shall not come, sweetheart!" he murmured, caressing the aureoled hair.

It was only an impulse, self-indulgent, regardless of consequences, as all impulses are, but with none of the ulterior wickedness, the far-seeing selfishness that is too often laid at the door of impulsive people.

"I had rather drown in the bottom of the sea than go back to Elk Mountain. There is a way out? You will find a way out?"

"There is a way out," said Richard, gravely, "but it is not the way you should go."

"I don't know what you mean," said Sararose, limpidly. She fluttered to her feet again, and sat by Hollister, her elbow on his chair; hope, prayer,

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eagerness, innocence, carelessness, written on her face.

Richard's chin quivered. It was too cruel to send her back to her brother. He could only save her from that by drawing her, somehow or other, into his life. It would compromise her. She might remain innocent, she would still be compromised. It would compromise him. Could he make himself a martyr to possible reproach, and let that reproach be undeserved, or would he choose to win the deserts of reproach, with its possibility? Dick Hollister was not the stuff of which martyrs are made. Would Sararose pay him his price?

Richard Hollister, what a black thought is this in your heart! It seems impossible that it should not stream up, darkly suffuse the face, and be written indelibly across the eyes.

The lily's white candor will suddenly change to mirk if a drop of ink be poured into the vase that holds it, but the flower of the human face will often remain stainless for all the mirk at the core. One may walk upon the street, with the stress of battle just emerged from, seared and throbbing like physical wounds, and no passer-by will look a second time. It seems a miracle. Such a mask, to the incurious, is the human face. One may go home and scan one's self in the glass, and say:

"Verily, strange things have come to pass within the house, but they are not sign-apparent upon the doors."

Yet the gentle flow of habit, for the traces of which one will never intently scan the mirror, will leave its indelible tracery, while the latest-come event, though it be a Titan, lurks inscrutable. From the

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frightful thought that had cropt into Richard's heart he looked up, the same adorable, deep-eyed, boyish flower of chivalry that had first been emblazoned on the shield of Alison's girlish love. A man may trample on women's hearts, and wear in his eyes the look of a tender, great god. Such a look was Richard's as he looked at Sararose, with the Frightful Thought in his heart. If he had been a better man, he would have looked wicked. The thought would have roused self-consciousness. What the philosopher of La Brède says of a certain social class was true of Richard: "Our virtues should be touched with a certain nobleness, our morals with a certain freedom, our manners with a certain politeness. The virtues exhibited in this society are always less what one owes to others than what one owes to one's self; they are not so much a response to an appeal from our fellow-citizens, as a mark of distinction between us and them. In this society men's actions are judged not as good, but as handsome; not as just, but as great; not as reasonable, but as extraordinary."

Richard could entertain a frightful thought with complacence, but he would have died rather than do an "unhandsome" thing.

Sararose, swift and eager, interpreted his face. She was used to face-reading, for there had been many a conflict between her and Enoch, between Enoch's loving heart and his stern will, when a word, a look from her at the right moment, had saved her the day.

"Ah, be good to me and save me, and—I will love you for it."

She dropped on her knees beside his chair. All her heart was in her child's face. Her eyes were as

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moment of sin at Whittopple Brook. Richard looked at her so searchingly that her breath came with a gasp.

"What do you mean?" she asked, answering the search of his eyes.

He put his head down to her upturned face, and took her lips to his, slowly, slowly, slowly. Then, "That is what I mean," he breathed.

The sharp, imperative clang of the electric bell, instantly repeated, came like a visible intruder between them. They spring apart, facing each other, both along the girl white as marble. The man thought of his wife, the girl of her brother, at the self-same instant. If it had been Alison, Richard would have hated Sararose for the same process which led him to kiss her. But it was not Alison.

"It is Enoch!" said Sararose. "No, no, don't! don't! You must not answer the bell!"

She hung all her weight upon him, between him and the door.

"Hush! don't you see! The servants must not be awakened."

Almost roughly he pushed her from him and went out to the hall.

Sararose fell backward on a lounge, but through half-closed doors came a voice belonging to one that recognized her. She flut this way and that, pushed open a door slowly, and knelt upon the floor in a darkened inner room.

"Your sister Sararose?"

Richard's glance went round the empty library. Enoch stood at the door, grey with suffering, his eyes a dry flame. The absence of them here. He

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had such eyes that emotion seen through their medium wore their color. If it was anger, blue seemed the color of anger; love, blue was the color of love. Now, blue seemed the very color and essence of pain.

"By Jove!" thought Hollister, "how he loves her!" and his feet began to feel tangled.

"She left the house to-night, some time between two and three, after the opera and the supper had unsettled her head."

This was unnecessary, but Enoch said it slowly and distinctly. He was never so swept away but that his purposes remained, evident to himself, if not to others. Even Richard diminished under that powerful gaze.

"Has she been here?"

"By Jove! I'm sorry you're in trouble, Enoch."

"Has she been here?"

"What are you saying? I left her in her room on Fortieth Street."

Richard, in tone and look, was dazed, compassionate, straightforward. He cursed himself inwardly. It was a devilish pickle for a fellow like him to be in. If the silly child had only stayed in the library—even so, the explanation would have been easier. For his sake, for hers too, for everybody's sake, he must lie out of it.

"Has she been here?"

For the third time the hammer fell with terrible persistence.

"Has she been here?" as if the question had just burst upon him. "No!"

The two men looked each other squarely in the eye, the man who loved "honor" and the man who

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loved honesty. Richard's eyes did not flinch before Enoch's, but his chin quivered once.

"You lie!" said Enoch. He was sure Richard lied. If Sararose had not been there, Richard would have gone for his hat and the elevator before Enoch's first inquiry had left his mouth. Enoch knew his man. Dick Hollister's was a nature of quick impulses and ready sympathy. Enoch hated him. Especially since the time when he knew his promotion in the lumber camp to be due to young Hollister's testimony had he hated him. Enoch was too proud to enjoy the sense of gratitude. Therefore, because he was proud, and sure, and hated, he said, "You lie!"

"Enoch Holme! But I forgive it, because you're beside yourself. Come, we will look for her together."

"You said that too late!" ground out Enoch. "I will look for her here!"

The two men faced each other again, more fiercely this time. The feint salutatory had passed between them. It was war to the death. Richard was aroused. The honor of himself and his house was at stake. His was the fierceness of self-preservation. Enoch was fierce in the hunt for Sararose, in the hunt for a lie.

"I will kill you if you cross that threshold!"

"Stand aside!"

It was words no longer between them, but the savage stillness of warring animals. The strength of the motive informs the action; the strength of the soul informs the motive. Enoch conquered. Richard crashed downward, the marks of Enoch's fingers on his throat and his right wrist disabled. The thick Angora rug before the fireplace broke his fall.

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But silence still reigned in the darkened inner room. Enoch had crossed the threshold, had seen the crumpled heap that lay by the bed. He did not stoop to it nor speak.

He went back to the man who had opposed him in vain. He raised him to the lounge, gave him water, hung over him, brotherly-wise.

“Are you all right?”

“All right,” and by this commonplace exchange did the battling souls retire for the nonce into the caves of neutrality.

Enoch had conquered, and the victory filled him with a scorn so sublimated that it was almost pity for the vanquished. As for his sister, if he had found her in the river, the white, drowned face would have been enshrined as a saint's in his memory all the rest of his life. Her frailties would have been forgotten in the tragedy of her end. She would have been dignified to him forever by the magnitude of his own sorrow. Perhaps even this is egoism. But Sararose, in a crumpled heap on the floor of Dick Hollister's bedroom—no humiliation was too great. The humiliation that is death to ourselves is a wholesome bitter to others. It would be well for those who hold authority to consider that humiliation, instead of building up, far oftener disintegrates character.

Enoch went again to that threshold, the defence of which had cost Hollister dear. Hollister watched him languidly. It did not matter so much now. He wondered that he had cared. Things, on the eve of happening, have a way of startling us with their portent—those same things, having happened, take their place among the many other commonplaces of

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life. As far as pleasant Richard could hate, he hated Enoch, not because Enoch had accused him of a lie, nor because he had found him out in a lie, but because he had assumed the lie to be a lie. It is manifestly an ungentlemanly advantage to assume that a man lies even when he is lying. But the disabled wrist gave Enoch a lien on Richard's respect.

"Sarasose," said Enoch, gravely, colorlessly—"Sarasose, get up!"

There was no answer, but a soft sound of skirts sweeping into the library. The hall-door had been left ajar, and Alison, arriving from her early train, floated like a breeze of morning into the hectic apartment. Fresh and dainty from the Pullman sleeper, rosy after her drive across the park, she stood, with the smile dying out of her clear eyes. Richard rose, and fell back again with a little sound, his right arm limp.

Alison went to him and kissed his damp forehead.

"My dear husband!" she said, proudly, compassionately, touching his arm.

She perceived the aura of past tumult, and her first thought was one of utter loyalty. Each man experienced that revulsion of feeling which comes of suddenly seeing one's self through the medium of another person's eyes. Enoch realized his hardness; Richard his weakness. Alison crossed the room to follow Enoch's gaze.

"She has fainted, Enoch," she said, swiftly gathering Sarasose into her strong young arms.

It was the first time she had called him Enoch, and he blessed her for it. It opened all the fountains of his heart.

It was characteristic of Alison that she demanded

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no explanations. To abstain from argument with drowning people is a rare moral accomplishment.

When Enoch opened the blinds and let the morning light quench the glare of the chandeliers, he knew for the first time that it was no longer night. The red sun glimmered over the bare, gray tops of the park, and the cable-cars, black with working-men, clanged their way down-town.

Only forty-eight hours before he had seen the Angel of Dawn spread her wings above the virgin blush of Adirondack snows.

CHAPTER XXXI

Alison's Advice

LATER in the day Enoch and Alison met for a talk. Enoch sought Alison's advice. It was not his habit to seek counsel from others, except in the way of strengthening a preconceived opinion. If they agreed with him, so far so good. If they disagreed, the argument left him more thoroughly convinced than ever. But his motive for seeking Alison's advice was the yearning of a whole winter, the renunciation on Mount Taseco, the hunger of the heart.

"Once, and once only," he said to himself, "and then back again to your hills and to loneliness and to the saving of Sararose."

He had not failed to note the transparency of Alison's look, a wistfulness that genius wears, or the soul that looks for gold and finds dross. The look of genius is indubitable—a vision of great things and the veil of earth between, a stretching out after infinity and death drawing us backward. So is it with the great heart that lavishes itself and is betrayed, that kneels and is refused. The look is one of transparency, clay worn fine and thin by the clear burning; of wistfulness such as children wear in their sleep. We may call it genius in both, for true loving is genius. A rare and inborn gift vouchsafed to the elect is the gift of high, passionate loving.

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Alison had found in her husband what she would not acknowledge to herself, though it was what she had not found that saddened her. Marriage had brought the real intimacy that years of fellowship had failed in doing. During the first romantic days of the horseback riding among the hills, love and youth had been enough. Many another time in the city a kiss and a dainty phrase had been Richard's answer to Alison's reach for his soul. Then came the times when he was silent, or the unrevealing commonplace had baffled her. She had learned that they could go thus far and no farther. Where she had thought to find a gate set into the delectable garden, through which they might go hand in hand into other and yet other pleasaunces, she had come up against a dead wall. The finality of a wall is appalling. It is its own sufficient answer. There is no appeal from it. It is hard for a young wife to go on and on through open gates into ever-widening gardens and leave the husband behind. It is harder still to circumscribe one's soul by the walls of another. By-and-by one forgets that there is a garden beyond, and by-and-by if one should look for the gate, one could not find it.

Richard felt that in some way he did not fulfil a vague, unreasonable ideal. Alison was the dearest woman in the world to him, but there were times when he could not understand her. There was a sort of material comfort in the adoration of Sararose's eyes and Ysobel Ruddle's witty audacity. But when Alison went to him that pale morning, and said, "My dear husband," he could have died in torment and counted himself happy.

With the clairvoyance of those who deeply feel

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and deeply love, Enoch read something of this mutual relationship in their two faces, and when he sought advice from Alison he hoped also to sow some seed that would spring up in the Christ-love and gladden her life. The talk between them went from Sararose to religion and from religion to Sararose.

The little sister, afterwards, never understood how her act of desperate folly led to such beneficent results. It had seemed like the last step into the gulf, and yet she had come to dry land. She did not know that madness of revolt teaches the tyrant his weakness. Enoch was expiating tyranny. For the first time in his life he had been brought face to face with a crop of his own sowing, but it needed Alison to show him that the crop was of his sowing.

"Save her!" pleaded Alison. "Will you save her by crushing her? Do you not know that her life and her soul are in her singing?"

"The culture of the voice, what is that worth beside the culture of the soul?"

"Can the soul be cultured if it is starved?"

"Starvation, what is that when the love of God makes pure?"

"How will you show her the love of God except by the love of man? Does man deny his beloved what she lives upon? You cannot feed Sararose upon your ideals. They are not her ideals. You cannot impose upon her your morality. It is not her morality."

"Is there more than one morality?"

"Surely, surely, Enoch. Plato may not blame Buddha, nor Buddha Christ."

"Each according to his light, Alison, but we have the Supreme Light, if we do not shut our eyes to it.

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Sararose is in the darkness, and therefore she does not know which way to turn."

"And will you lead her to the light, Enoch?"

"I will teach her Christ, if I may. I will show her the salvation of the cross."

"That is your religion, Enoch. Perhaps it will not be hers."

"I do not understand you. Yes, I know; I know you are not a believer in religion."

"Truly, I am a believer in religions," said Alison, earnestly, "but there is no such thing as religion. It is your religion, my religion. Religion, like heaven, is personal, individual; each one must find and hold to his own. Your religion is Christ and the four gospels. You are right."

"What is your religion, Alison?"

Her hands trembled in her lap. She folded and then unfolded them in a way that went to Enoch's heart.

"I used to think that love of Richard and Mary was my religion. I am not so sure now."

The simplicity of her self-revelation was touching. She did not dream how clear a revelation it was.

"Why are you not so sure now?"

Enoch's questions, so direct that they were almost brutal, were yet unfolded with an exquisite tenderness by the look in his eyes.

"Religion is what one wants most, what makes one better," said Alison, not answering Enoch, but thinking. "Human love makes this one better, to sing well is another's happiness, to make a statue, to raise wheat—it is all religion if one wants it supremely and lives up to it sincerely."

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"One ought to want most something far higher than a mere personal ambition."

"Ah, but it is not what one ought, but what one does want that moulds one's life. Besides, I do not call self-expression a mere personal ambition. Self-expression is the fulfilment of the universe, individuality is God."

"But self-expression must, of necessity, be incomplete. Human love is too often insecure. If that be our religion and it fails us, what then?"

"What then?" Alison's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Enoch, human love will never fail us if we do not fail in human love."

"What of the breaking hearts," asked Enoch, "and what of forbidden love?"

There came a long silence between them, those two who held their secret each from the other, the secret of the unbroken bread and the untouched wine.

"There is no such thing as forbidden love," was at last Alison's solemn reply.

It was to Enoch the echo of something heard before; suddenly the room, with its Pompeian red walls, the tiled fireplace, the Beata Beatrix above the mantel, Alison, with the lace across her bosom and the diamond on her finger, all were familiar. He had seen them all; he had heard those words before.

True, he had heard them before in the lumber camp at dawn, when the souls of the sleepers rose and spoke to him, and that was what they had said. Also, the flower of winter dawn, rose-colored in the virginal white woods had spoken to him those words. He had not listened then, but he heard them and heeded now. One never knows what years of stony

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misunderstanding have gone to the making of one crystal moment of knowledge.

A great weight was lifted from Enoch. He who had come to teach was taught. Then, "What would you have me do with Sararose?" he meekly said.

"Let her work out her own life; free her from yourself, that she may find herself."

"Think of her mad folly."

"She was safe — with Richard," said Alison, proudly.

"Think what might have been if she had gone elsewhere, if I had not known, had not found her?"

"Think what brought her to it," said Alison, looking fearlessly into Enoch's upright eyes, "of dread so great that what girls should dread most was nothing to her. I think with you, Enoch, that she is in peril, but that peril, perhaps, lies in the very barriers you have set to save her. There is no one so reckless as he who has all his life been governed by some one else's conscience and then finds himself free."

"Would you have me leave her alone, Alison; alone, and so light, so impressible, so emotional?"

"A thousand times no," said Alison. "Stay with her, be a brother to her, but not a master."

"I had thought," said Enoch, slowly, "that she needed the lesson of self-denial; that I would take her to the mountains; that I would stay with her there."

"You would not thwart your own life in thwarting hers also," said Alison, tremblingly, for she realized the depth of Enoch's conviction. "Stay with her, love her, cherish her, leave her free."

Then did it flash upon Enoch, imperfectly as yet,

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that the crop was of his own sowing. *A brother, but not a master.*

"I am a lost soul," he said. "I will stay with her, and save her and save myself, too."

As they parted, said Enoch, musingly, to Alison, "You said there was no such thing as forbidden love."

"Yes," she replied, with a child's simple look into his eyes.

The great moral earnestness and simplicity of the man was to her like drinking from a deep, clear mountain spring.

She found in him the strength of the hills, but she herself was the morning light that bathed them in serenity.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Impossible Punch-Bowl

THEY were having a private vaudeville show at the Velasquez (in somebody's studio). An Irish poet read erotic verse, rising to his tip-toes at the refrain like an ecstatic blackbird. Then he came down from the stage to talk about golf with a Mephistophelian girl in red. Dick Hollister did a negro minstrel, introducing several exotic jokes and labored puns, with a casual manner and a gurgling laugh supposedly African. The masterful ease of his turn won him an excellent "hand." A fat, silver-gilt blonde, in white stockings and a blue-sashed baby pinafore, impersonated in monologue a naughty child. The *arrière pensée* of naughty maturity was in her rolling eyes and suppressed giggle. She was particularly appreciated by the row of nonchalant, smooth-faced men who posed against the palms in the back of the hall, and were pointed out as celebrities to outsiders who had paid their two dollars for the evening's vaudeville. The fat, blonde lady in the silly slippers was known to all the men as a jolly good fellow. Sararose, deliciously the *jeune fille* in her white frock and black velvet streamers, wearing her hair in two long braids of burnished copper, sang some little songs with a *naïveté* that completed her

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conquest of Lindsay Nixon. The touching girlishness of her gown and poses had been carefully thought out for her by Mrs. Ned Hollister. Sararose was a ready pupil. Nixie led her off, after the songs, to the improvised greenroom behind the curtains.

There was a ballet in which Mrs. Ned wore wheat around her forehead and led the seasons. Somebody else's picturesque boy, with Florentine square-cut hair, sat emblematically in the hollow of Mrs. Ned's Demeter arm. This was vociferously applauded, for almost everybody had a sister or sweetheart in the mazes of the symbolic dance, and Mrs. Ned was known to have worn away a box of pencils over the argument.

Then Ysobel danced the Sevillaña. She swept and swirled, rattling her castanets in long, free curves, with her black lace draperies dipping and twisting. Through half-closed lids her sleepy, dangerous eyes shot fire, and languid lips, half open, smiled and smiled.

"There is no other woman in the Velasquez who could do the Sevillaña," remarked Rathbun to Nixie, "and you have about every type here in this caravanserai."

"She has the Moorish figure, hasn't she?" said Nixie, "little ankles, superb hips, and a young girl's firm, round bosom. How beautiful Alison is as the spirit of poetry, with the laurel wreath and those eloquent lines of her face."

The outsiders had mostly gone now, and the Velasquez crowd were dancing. Some eight or ten couples were gathered round the big punch-bowl on the edge of the low stage. The bowl was an extraordinary de-

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sign of Nixie's, women diving, half floating, head downward in greenish water, the faces at point of central circumference, the arms and hair streaming together in dank coils towards the base, and the spread feet forming the upper rim. It was executed in faïence. The consensus of educated opinion called it impossible. Loving critics said he had stood on his head to do it, and quoted Bab ballads to him.

"Impossible, isn't it?" said Richard to Ysobel, as he ladled out the very strong punch after a dance.

"On the contrary, quite reasonable," answered Ysobel, "if all art, as they say, is a growth from within out. After this punch—who mixed it, by-the-way?—one naturally sees things upside down."

They floated off together in a waltz. Margery Rathbun and another woman, sitting out a dance together, nodded towards them.

"It's a pity," said the woman under her breath. "Ysobel's leading him a pretty dance in more senses than one."

"It's a shame," said Margery, who, although of the Velasquez crowd, was not with them. An ascetic home training had implanted certain ineffaceable scruples.

Then they both looked towards Alison, with the polished wreath across her milky brows and grapevine hair. She sat at one side, talking with Sararose and Nixie. The Ruddle-Hollister affair had just reached that point when every one knew, but no one knew that the others knew, and, least of all, did the principals.

It was talked of *sub rosa*, and jealously guarded from outsiders, as well as such things can be guarded, for, at best, a secret guarded is only temporiz-

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ing. However, it is remarkable how such temporizing may be extended. His friends were very loyal to Dick Hollister, and every one loved Alison.

"There's an affair I like better," said the woman, indicating Sararose and Nixie.

The artist's dust-colored, narrow face, usually opaque and bored, was played upon by many lights.

"Charming," said Margery, with the complacency of the match-maker. "And we brought them together. Now Alison is ready to go, and Dick won't be torn away from Ysobel."

The two women watched their world with the quiet shrewdness that comes of long cosmopolitanism.

"Just as I thought. The Ned Hollisters are going to take her home. Here's your brother coming for you."

Thus do we act out our little lives in dumb show, severely ignorant of the spectators that interpret every gesture into significant lines.

"Ysobel and Richard will stay on till the wee sma' hours. They will have high jinks in this studio when only the inner circle remains. Come, Sararose, even we are outer integuments. Oh, Nixie is to be one of us home? *Tant mieux!*"

Mary had a little room next to Alison's in the Central Park West apartment. After Alison had gone to bed a small white figure crept into her room.

"Are you all alone? May I get in and cuddle up to you? Hasn't Dickie come home yet? I suppose big men loves to come home late better zan ladies? They aren't afraid of the brack night, be they?"

Mary had a dear little way of transposing and generally mixing the sounds of her consonants. Alison

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drew her against her breast with passionate caresses.

"I 'ould be awful affraid of the brack night, wouldn't you, Alison? Does ze witch ladies get people in ze city, or only in the great big woods?"

Mary had just reached the questioning age, when the "scheme of things entire" passed under her wondering eye for constant investigation.

"Why is your cheeks all wetted, Alison? Have you been naughty and clying?"

"No, sweetheart. Be good and go to sleep."

"Then you have been solly and clying. I'm solly, too," said Mary, with tears in her eyes.

The Eternal Mother in her expressed itself by little comforting arms about Alison's neck.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Dream Trail

THESE pleasant spring days, it seemed that the whole town turned itself inside out for a walk. Fifth Avenue led the procession, with a multitude of gay women, more or less occupied with their own clothes and each other's, escorted by conspicuously well-dressed men, more or less occupied with their own ladies or each other's. The most audacious of the season's crop of hats had been transferred from milliners' stalks to feminine heads, and only a few hopeless eccentricities now blossomed in show-windows, where they were gazed at by out-of-town visitors and blue-coated boys, with special delivery letters. A shining stream of horses and carriages filled the street.

From Fifth Avenue east and west all the avenues had their kaleidoscopic processions, rapidly changing in type with each square's geographical demarkation, from the Sixth Avenue shoppers, with their paper parcels, and weary children tagging after the dusty, parental skirts, and Eighth Avenue's checkered population, habitués of delicatessen shops and corner saloons, to the East Side, with Lexington Avenue's quorum of eagle-faced men and black-eyed women, with big hats and spangly fronts, and remote Avenue A, with its groups of shouting children in the middle

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of the street, and hatless women carrying sausages home for supper.

Across the avenues wound Broadway, a country of itself, with a race and type all its own; the women wore street dresses of daring or delicate tints, unknown on Fifth Avenue, and carmine cheeks were suggestively veiled with the latest fad in gauzes. Young girls walked by threes, laughing loudly, and bunches of men by cigar-shops or hotel entrances along the Rialto inspected coolly. "Did my turn," "got a hand," and "booked for the heavy," came in whispers here and there from the genial, expansive "profession," who loitered about lobbies, or poured out from the agencies. It was the season when automobile coats were worn by those who never ride in automobiles. The Broadway girl sported a mannish coat, loose of cut and gray in color, and the Fifth Avenue woman affected serpentine effects of ostentatious simplicity. There was a general air of exhilaration. Despite the proverbial lassitude of spring, every one seemed starting out on a new project. Now and again, in pitiful contrast with the general cheer, a poor waif of a woman clung to the inner edge of the sidewalk, in sad clothes that had not even been "made over," that sagged at the hem, and gaped at the waist, with a tousled winter hat over the wreck of her hair, or a seedy man trailed along the edge of the gutter, with cracks in his shoes, and a greasy coat buttoned around his collarless neck. On a freshly washed, shining afternoon of May, such human left-overs seem morally impossible. Their pathos waxes almost grotesque by its spectacular lack of harmony.

Pansies were out and fountains splashing in the

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square. Benches were full of idle men sunning themselves, and reading yesterday's papers, and the walks were gay with bonneted children and cheerful mothers. Violets and roses were sold for a song at street-corners, and lilacs and apple-blossoms were hawked about the avenues. Some of the cab-horses around Madison Square had been frisked out with faded roses below the ears. Little newsboys darted hither and thither, with damp piles of evening papers, hugely lettered, and the usual black line of people made themselves into a human frieze about the glass windows of the Moorish newspaper building at Herald Square. The news-stands were gay with poster covers of spring magazines, and within those covers were sad little poems about the scent of the violet bed and the memory of the dead, apple-blooms and tombs, and pictures of pretty women who would like to be well known, in various photographic poses of pensiveness or disdain.

As Alison left the house, Mary preceded her, looking adorable in her light-blue sun-bonnet, and rolling her hoop with admirable skill. A street peddler cried strawberries in a long, mellow roar. This was spring in the city—gay, heterogeneous, kaleidoscopic, city spring. It was not the spring that Alison longed for, but it had potency enough to thrill with a sense of brooks unbound somewhere, butterflies opening somewhere slow, splendid wings, of shy flowers breaking the soil in some dark, fragrant wood, and the breath of spruce buds somewhere wafted abroad on the unthinking hills.

It was spring for Enoch, also, but not the spring that he knew. Spring on the lower East Side is a hectic affair of stale vegetables, jammed streets, fever-

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ish screams of playing children, hysterical chattering of women with street vendors, and gardens of calicoes and red and purple ribbons in sidewalk booths. Enoch, when he did not think of Alison, thought of a bath in the Elder River, of a colored mist of rainbows around Lost Inn, and of the secret scent of twin-flowers by Witchhopple Brook. He spoke one evening to an unresponsive audience in the little mission chapel on "The Love of Trees." It was a subject Alison had suggested to him, but it did not take with the East-Siders.

Enoch had a dream that night which more than compensated him for the evening's failure. He dreamed of the kindly trees. The Angel of the Hills came down to comfort him.

He climbed Mount Taseco, climbed up through dark and cool and rosy filtered sunlight, splashed like thrown coins on the forest floor. But he could not hit the trail, and he came against obstacles, giant windfalls, huge, slippery boulders, and briery underbrush. In his waking hours he would have known that there was no trail, but in his dreams he sought and sought. At last he heard one call him through the trees. He came upon a great stone dripping with moisture, and in its shadow a spring, clear as a cairngorm, with a green rain of maiden-hair ferns around its edge. There she stood, with one hand upon the great stone and the other outstretched to him. Then he knew he had hit the trail. He took her hand, and they went upward together. Enoch cried out in his happiness, and drew some one to his breast in man's good, simple, passionate possessing, and there she clung, in woman's simple, passionate surrender. It was all a bit confused after that,

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with the sun from Mount Taseco pouring into his eyes. When he woke, he still felt the dear weight within his arms, the dear, imagined weight he had never known. Ah, God! to dream and dream, and never to have at all!

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Road to Rome

ENOCH, after that dream, realized the meaning of his restlessness. He saw Alison too often, and was eating his heart out for her between whiles. Like a man who lives on drugs is he who feeds on an unsatisfied love.

"This is not living," he said to himself; "it is waiting for the next time."

Now, waiting for the next time is the most wasteful motive possible for life. It plays havoc with accomplishment and fritters away the very soul.

"She said no love was forbidden. I took her word for it, and have tried to live on the forbidden. But I want the forbidden. God help me. I will go back to my hills, and put all my strength into the saw-mill and the river-drive, and let the East Side go."

Then he knew that it was not for the sake of souls nor of Sararose that he had spent the past months in New York. He had been deceiving himself. He looked at his watch and found it was time for him to go to the Boys' Club Room. It was Thursday, Alison's day, and he always walked with her through the tortuosities of the foreign streets, across the Bowery, and then he would put her on a Madison Avenue car, spinning arrogantly around the Grand Street

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curve, like a comet from another world, past the Turkish rhubarb and Chinese nuts of sidewalk booths and the strange jargon of sellers and buyers. There is a grotesqueness about a carload of humanity, mutually oblivious, yet sitting shoulder to shoulder, or facing each other for the space of an hour, and with no more sense of kinship than so many stones. Sometimes all of a sudden an instinct within one cries. "Why, these are people, really people," and you look at your opposite neighbor again, and if he winces or drops his eyes, then you may know that at the self-same instant you are a person to him, and the discomfort of human recognition has been established between you.

Enoch stood within the door watching the closing events of the afternoon. It had been the tumultuous occasion of the semi-annual election of officers of the Junior Order of the Knights of the Round Table. The name was a relic of the romanticism of Alison's predecessor, combined, or rather clashing, with the consensus of opinion of last year's club. The club had almost gone to pieces last year under the strain of a too-decorative up-town patronage, which had interfered with the racy virility of Russo-Jewish leadership. The new president, one Abraham Moscovitzky, stood at the head of the long table, wearing an almost visible toga of authority and wielding the gavel with the magnificence of young despotism. Mrs. Hollister sat at the other end, at her ease, and with the boys about her at ease, not the insolent ease of familiarity, but deferential ease of understanding. She had introduced among them the crafts of basket-weaving and bent-iron work. There is nothing like fellow-craftsmanship for a solid basis of respect. Her

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predecessors had worn parlor faces, talked flim-flam, and were "dead easy" on tricks.

"This meeting will now come to order," said Abraham Moscovitzky, assuming the rights of office with severity. "The meeting will now be opened by a motion to adjourn."

This slip did not pass unnoticed by either the retiring president or unsuccessful rival candidate. Alison, meeting their glances, smiled in sympathy, and they agreed between themselves, afterwards, that she was no lobster.

A motion was made and seconded.

"I t'ird de motion," said the wag of the club, with unendurable triteness, which the thunderous gavel of Moscovitzky promptly quenched.

Then they caught sight of Enoch, and order became disorder as they clamored for a story. They were of the age and the heredity and the ward when bloodshed interests more than peace, the wars of things more than the loves of things. Enoch compromised by a story of adventure, a broken dam, a log-jam uncaged and rushing on with the walls of a freshet to attack a little town, and a wild horseback ride that saved the hamlet from destruction. Alison knew that the rider was himself, and her blood was stirred.

The boys recounted the tale among themselves in paraphrases, Yiddish English and Bowery slang, till by the time they had reached their several homes it was already a classic, another book in the Odyssey of which Enoch was both bard and hero.

Alison and Enoch, walking thoughtfully westward, passed the outer fringe of a street crowd. The nucleus was unseen.

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"Ain't nawthin' but a scrap, teacher," said one of Alison's young friends.

The social instinct that settlement life develops would not let them pass on till they had discovered two mites of boys savagely pommelling each other to the immense delight of a bloodthirsty amphitheatre. A murtherin' Micky and a furrin' Dago were the combatants, and their fellow-countrymen egged them on with the fulness of racial fury.

"They will hurt each other, the poor children," said Alison. "Stop them, Enoch."

"They cayn't shtop, teacher," replied Alison's communicative friend, equally ready to listen and to answer. His small, freckled face looked solemnly up to hers, as if a decree of Kismet were being slandered.

"Why not?"

"There's 'fteen cents up," he answered, in the awe-struck tone of one who speaks of unaccustomed millions.

Enoch laughed as they walked on.

"What extremely personal and relative things *can'ts* are," he remarked. "If I say *I can't* who dares tell me *I can*, and yet how God must smile at man-made impossibilities."

All roads lead to Rome, that spiritual Rome which is the goal of our thoughts. It matters not what book we read, what fair or painful sight we see, what text the preacher takes, what play we hear, what trivial theme for dinner-table talk, they do but lead, as if by fateful conspiracy, to the one goal of our thoughts, our Rome. All roads lead to Rome.

Enoch's speech shot an after-thought of fire through his heart. Impossibility. It was battling

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with impossibility that had wrecked his sleep for many nights; he had lived in torment for the last months. Was the impossibility man-made or God-made? Ah, Enoch, how you have changed since a year ago. To love another's wife, a *man-made* impossibility!

"Yet," said Enoch to himself, "I am between two impossibilities, a must and a can't. I must stop loving her, and I can't stop loving her."

"Alison," said he, aloud—they had called each other by their first names ever since that terrible morning—"which is stronger, a *must* or a *can't*?"

Alison, too, had been travelling the road to Rome, and was staring with frightened eyes into impossibility. Outwardly, one saw a woman of buoyant carriage, with clear rings of color in the olive cheeks, blown black hair in a charming tangle, and dark eyes somewhat abstracted. Inwardly, she had reached that blank wall, where once she thought there was a gate. She had ceased to love Richard. She feared that some day she would hate him. She knew that in his way he loved her still. She guessed also that faithfulness was not a law in his religion of love.

"Must it be for always, and always, and always?" she asked herself.

There is something terrible in an *always*. It is never a cool, middling thing. It is said with clinched teeth or with glowing lips.

Then Enoch's question came, startling her like an unlooked-for sign-post on her lonely road to Rome.

"Which is stronger, a *must* or a *can't*?"

"God's *must* is stronger than man's *can't*."

"I believe it," said Enoch; "man's *can't* may

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stand in the way for a little while, but in the end God's law prevails."

"And the torment comes," Alison said, "when we don't put ourselves in harmony with the universal decrees."

"How unconscious she is," thought Enoch, looking at her heightened color and the fringe of eyelash as she walked beside him.

She seemed to him almost cruel that she could walk so near him and not know how his heart beat for her.

"But then," Alison's voice continued, "we are not to blame, only to be pitied. We do not learn these universal decrees, except, sometimes, by torment. It is ignorance, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," Enoch replied, abruptly, for God's *must* seemed clear to him that moment, and he took an inexorable resolve which set his steps at a furious pace.

He forged ahead of Alison by perhaps a half-square's length when he remembered himself and her. He looked back to see her laughing and despairing behind him. After that they were quite commonplace till Enoch put her on the yellow car, with its irrelevant, incurious load of souls and bodies.

Enoch walked up-town to spend the evening with his sister. A remarkable change had come over the girl since the night when she had stood on the edge of disaster. Some natures require the touch of adventure, adventure in the broad, undesired sense, to bring them to themselves. Sometimes it seems the merest casualty which way the adventure ends. A straw will decide. But that decisive straw has the momentum of mountains. The chastening effect of

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a great fear, the dignifying effect of trust reposed in her, showed in her face and manner. Also the secret, the beginning without a sequel between her and Richard, had its mighty mission in bidding her beware.

We pray "Lead us not into temptation," for He has also the power and sometimes the purpose to lead us there.

"Lead us into temptation and save us therefrom, that we afterwards may know and beware."

CHAPTER XXXV

A Repenting and a Temptation

"Do you know, Dick," said Ysobel, "people are talking about us?"

"What do we care?"

"I don't care, but you do."

"What are they saying?"

"Some things that are true, which is bad enough."

"Ysobel, penitent!"

"And some things that aren't true, which is worse."

Ysobel repeated her words slowly, and with emphasis.

"Why are you telling me this, Ysobel? Haven't we enjoyed each other? People will always talk."

"Do you love your wife?"

"Heavens! You know I love her!"

"Does she know that you do?"

"Ysobel, there's something come between Alison and me. When she's with me, she's miles away. She leans her elbow on the table and thinks. She thinks a devilish deal too much. I'm not making her happy. She's disappointed, and I'm dashed if I know what's the matter!"

"So you're restless, and come to me to amuse you."

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"Ysobel! But I believe you're right."

"Meanwhile, people are talking, with one eyebrow elevated, and Alison's thinking, her elbow on the table."

"What's to be done, anyhow?"

"Supposing the talk reached Alison, and you knew it, then what?"

"Then what?" Richard started to his feet in a savage fashion, and looked as if he were about to smash all the bric-à-brac in Mrs. Ruddle's apartment. "Then what?"

"You would never want to see my face again!" cried Ysobel, curtly, sternly.

Richard wheeled to the divan, where Ysobel had drawn herself up to a sitting posture.

"Tell me the truth! Does Alison know?"

"Go to her!" cried Ysobel. "Find out for yourself! She would be blind, deaf, dumb, and innocent as a babe unborn if she did not at least suspect!"

"Alison never suspects!"

"Then if she doesn't suspect, she has stopped loving you!"

"I can't stand this from you, Ysobel. You're the very d— I beg your pardon. You're torturing me. You've led me on at your own pace. You've held me up to the world's ridicule and my wife's contempt, and now you're laughing at me. God in heaven, I'd rather die than bring dishonor to Alison!"

Richard's morality abhorred the name of the thing more than the thing. By the same code, the woman who is discovered sinks lower than the woman who sins.

"Go to her," said Ysobel, dryly. "Go to her be-

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fore it's too late. She had rather hear it from your lips than another's. There! I've done preaching for a day. Pour me out some cognac before you leave. Thank you. Good-bye!"

Richard seized his hat, and left the building in a hurry.

"Must I tell her?" he thought. Self-flagellation was new to him, but to live in daily suspense was worse yet. He was too frank to conceal from his wife his fear of her surmises. Ysobel had sown the fear. As long as he had been going it blind, he could meet Alison's eyes candidly, in the old way, across the breakfast-table. But now—it would be impossible. Never again! How thankful he was that there was no more to tell than—there was. Would Alison believe him? With the purity of her nature she could never think such evil. Not unless—unless—it came to her first through some one else—in some other way. God forbid! Richard quickened his pace. It was evening. He had reached the tall, glittering corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street, where the huge hotels tower splendidly above the park gates, and the endless throng of vehicles and cars makes a hopeless tangle for the pedestrian. Richard swung across the street, unheeding the automobiles and runabouts that bore down upon him arrogantly.

If once the knowledge should come to Alison, in the wrong way, and she should be roused to belief, what a staggering blow it would be to her! Would she ever trust him, love him, again?

At about the time that Richard was calling on Mrs. Ruddie, in the late afternoon, Alison sat in the library, reading, or, rather, trying to read. A book

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is one of the most ineffective distractions possible. One may turn the pages mechanically, with the automatic mind following sentence after sentence, while underneath the self-conscious mind pursues its train of thought undisturbed. Then the self-conscious mind will be downed no longer, breaks through the thin, superimposed layer of automatic mind, and you fling the book on the floor tempestuously, crying, "I don't know a word I've been reading!"

Little Mary aroused Alison by coming to her knee and saying, "Read me somezings, Alison."

Alison turned the pages of the *Spanish Ballads*. She had been trying to think that life was the same to her as when she and Dick had read ballads together in the out-of-door studio.

"That's a cunning littly pome," said Mary, peering over the edge of the book, and putting a dimpled finger on the page. Mary could speak very plainly now, and was making great progress with her primer.

"It's a Spanish ballad," said Alison:

"Since for kissing thee, Minguillo,
Mother scolds me all the day,
Let me have it quickly, darling;
Give me back my kiss, I pray."

She could see Richard's face, and the laughing red light in his eyes. The memory remained, but the thrill of the moment had gone. Not all the striving of a lifetime can recreate one fleeting minute's spell. Alison smiled away the yearning, and leaned to Mary's wild-rose face.

"I'll show you, Mary. Kiss me, and I'll take it back again."

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The two sisters acted out the ballad, with pretty laughter between them:

“If we have done aught amiss,
Let's undo it while we may,
Quickly give me back the kiss,
That she may have naught to say.”

“I like that Spanish pome. Was Minguillo a nice littly boy?”

“I hope so,” returned Alison, and then her mind began to wander again, for it was already the dinner-hour, and Richard had not returned.

The cook came to find out if she should “wait” dinner or not for Mr. Hollister, and Alison decided not to wait.

“May I get down and play?” asked Mary, between the roast and the salad, having satisfied her appetite.

Alison assented listlessly, and the child retired to the little library that adjoined the dining-room, where she sat upon the floor and spread out her possessions luxuriously. She had spent the morning with a neighbor in the Plantagenet, and had picked up fragments of conversation, which she now proceeded to construct into a drama enacted by her dolls. There was a black-eyed and saucy man-doll, an uncomfortably plump, waxen beauty, and a limp rag-baby of unwieldy and one-sided proportions. Mary murmured and cooed to herself, mingling instruction and advice to the dolls, with speeches supposed to emanate from their mute, painted lips.

“You're Richard, 'cause I want you to sit by Ysobel. Please hold her tightly. Don't let her head

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go flopsy. You're just a gone dafty about her. You was always dandlin' after women's petticoats!"

These last, evidently quotations, were delivered in a tone of intensest scorn.

"You poor old rag-baby, don't cly! That's what all mans does. You sit and think about it a few days, then you play with the fire your own self."

Mary became aware that Alison, between the portières, regarded her with a strange, frightened stare.

"Don't be 'fraid," she piped. "I'm not really going to let poor rag-baby play with the fire, 'cause she'd burn all up."

The man-doll supported on his manly shoulder the unresponsive flaxen beauty.

"They are Ysobel and Richard, and the rag-baby is some other person. They didn't say."

"Who?" asked Alison, fiercely, knowing too well that the little child's sensitive-plate memory recorded the morning's gossip.

"The ladies where I went visiting. Alison, it's not naughty!" she pleaded, with the accusation of her sister's stony look upon her. "I didn't mean to be naughty."

"You're not naughty, darling!" Alison's blinding tears of mortification mixed with the innocent tears of the little girl. Mary had been recording words and praises with the faithfulness of a machine, but now she began to think.

"They was not our Ysobel and Dickie," she said, earnestly. "Our Dickie is a great big man, and a 'dafty' is a plitty flower, like a dandelion. But what is a gone dafty? I s'pose it's like the old gran'-pa dandelions with gray hairs."

Alison choked back her tears till she could aban-

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don herself to the paroxysm of passionate pain that surged within her. She put Mary to bed, with grave caresses, but dared not trust herself to speak. Mary was saddened by her adored sister's strange, different manner, and felt herself crushed by the weight of her own wickedness.

"Did you think I was so naughty when I named the hollid, hateful littly dollies Ysobel and Richard?"

Mary, like older folk, expended vigorously the vials of her wrath on the passive third party.

"They were not our Ysobel and Dickie, were they, Alison?"

Alison kissed Mary's trembling lips to silence, but the persistent little question was reiterated, pathetically.

"Were they, Alison?"

"No, no, no!" cried Alison, with vehement effort, and fled from the room.

"The first deceit," she said to herself, bitterly, "and this is only the beginning!"

With the lights turned low in the library, she gave herself over to realization of the truth. An unwelcome truth must fight its way to our sense. We cast it out, but it comes knocking again and again. It glowers at the window, it thrusts its face through the door, its foot is upon the threshold before we have time to close the door. We shut our eyes to it, but when we open them, it gibbers at our elbow, it is implanted by our hearth-stone.

"Soiled, soiled!" cried Alison. "If there were but a God to help me! Must I keep this soiled thing in my life?"

She shivered the shiver of the clean recoiling from dirt.

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Then Richard came in, with the gravity of contrition on his face. He saw Alison, dimly white by the wavering window, and knew that she knew. He went over to her without a word, and knelt by her, putting his cheek against her shoulder in the boyish, simple fashion he had. But she did not turn her face to his, nor did she speak.

"Sweetheart, I have wronged you. I have come to ask your forgiveness!"

He could not go on, because she was so very quiet. He wanted her hand for sympathy and support. It lay cold and trembling in her lap, and would not respond to his touch.

"My God!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet, and standing with his back to her, "is that the way you feel? I have not wronged you as much as you think. I—"

"Don't say any more," she shuddered. He went over and leaned his face to hers.

"Look at me!"

She raised her clear eyes to his. They were cold and remote as stars—no hatred in them, no scorn, only miles of immeasurable distance.

"Don't you believe in me?" he said, with a passionate quivering of the whole white face. His brown eyes melted with anguish. Had he thrown her irrecoverably away?

Alison shivered again. He and Ysobel—he and—perhaps, yes, he and Sararose! Soiled, soiled!

"Do I believe in you? I cannot tell—"

Wounded love would have scorched him with fervid accusation, burned him with tragic reproach, drowned him with torrents of tears, swept him away with whirlwinds of appeal. Dead love sat passively,

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looking beyond him, with cold eyes, into a starless future.

This was not Alison, was not any one he had ever known. It had always been so easy in Richard's life for him to retrieve a fault. He was the sort of person we delight to forgive.

"My God! I deserve it!" he said, kneeling by the other window, and burying his face in his hands.

Poor Alison, loving him no more, had ceased to understand him. She believed his self-accusation.

"I am going over to father's to-night," said Richard, controlling a sob. His own emotions stirred him almost beyond control. "We have to talk over some business matters. It will probably be late before we finish, so I won't return—home—here—to-night."

He waited a minute for the marble statue to become flesh, to melt, for the dear arms around his neck.

"Thank you," said Alison. It was the cruelest thing she could have said.

With a dry sob, which he turned into a cough, Richard went out. In a minute he returned and found her where he had left her, still standing.

"Who—how—did you know?"

"Mary!" said Alison, and broke into terrible weeping, falling face downward on the divan.

Richard was consumed with grief, the deeply experienced emotion of an impulsive nature that pities itself. Self-pity is most tragic in demonstration. Many people turned to look at him a second and a third time as he rode in the street-cars, such was the wounded look of his mouth and eyes. The grief that lasts a lifetime often does not mark the face so.

When Enoch Holme came that evening to bid Mrs.

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Hollister good-bye, he found her calm, with the faintest shadow of tears on her eyelids. Alison resolved to ask him for help. He was so unworldly, so pure, so strong, he would take a higher standpoint than her own or the world's.

They had a long and intimate talk, speaking only of general truths, of abstract right and wrong, with the intensely personal event like a veiled presence between them.

"Forever and ever," said Alison, "must one abide by consequences? May one not draw a line through the mistaken past, and turn to a fresh page? What law is there, after love is dead, that should link two lives together in hypocritical semblance?"

Then Enoch realized that she spoke of herself, and the great temptation came to him. Swept away was all thought of right and wrong in the high tide of joy that burst the flood-gates of his heart.

"Is love dead?" he demanded, with curious fierceness, for it seemed to him that his life depended on the answer.

Alison knew that he knew, and was glad. In those hours during which she and the unwelcome truth had fought each other she had lived a lifetime of subterfuge. She was sick of subterfuge.

"It is killed," she answered.

"Then you are mine, mine, mine!" exulted Enoch's heart, but the man himself was silent.

"Shall I live a lie or set myself free?" asked Alison, pitifully humble, reaching out eloquent hands to Enoch, like one who beseeches a little, little kindness.

"Be good to me, be kind to me, save me!" the hands pleaded.

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If the problem had come to Enoch in any other shape, except as a plea for freedom, from the woman whose freedom would have been his own heart's joy, it is doubtful how he might have answered. It was the Temptation of the Mount to him. The five minutes of thought were hours to them both.

"Does he love you?"

"I believe that he does, in his way."

"You want to do right?" said Enoch, rising and looking down on her from his great height. "Are you passionate for righteousness or for happiness?"

"I want to do right," said Alison, simply as a child, "and I don't know what right is. All my religion is gone from under me. Love is gone!"

Enoch's temptation was too imminent to give him room to think. There was no thinking it out, no balancing of sides, no argument. He himself had joined their hands in marriage. Should he also—Perish the thought! And yet, stolen bread to a starving man! Is it in human power to refuse? Enoch paced up and down the room. He was speaking. Alison had to bend forward to listen. The words were not meant for her.

"To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part—"

Enoch stopped before the Beata Beatrix.

"Till death us do part," repeated Alison, turning and turning the ring upon her finger.

Again Enoch paced up and down.

"Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

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The ceremony enveloped Alison for the second time.

"There is no escaping from consequences, Alison. You may run from them, but they will follow. God bless you!"

He kissed her forehead, and took his hat to go.

"And love?"

"God also may recreate love."

"I will pray to Him to-night," said Alison.

Thus, in his great love for Alison, did Enoch crucify himself that night, and only his own heart knew.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Pyrola Flowers

SOME of the Hollisters were in camp again that summer. One day Alison got a message from Mrs. Ruddle at the Loon Lake Hotel, and went over there in response to her request.

"Shall we go out for a walk?" asked Ysobel. "The roses in this wall-paper are fairly screaming at me to-day."

They took the lane behind the hotel that led upward towards the hills.

"It was awfully good of you to come, Alison. I ran up here for this one talk."

"I came near sending you a different answer," said Alison.

"You hated to see me again, I know. That's just why I wanted to see you. Alison, you're doing Richard a wrong."

There had been times when Ysobel's directness was refreshing. To-day it jarred.

"We won't talk about that," said Alison, coldly, stooping to pick some pyrola blossoms that nodded, waxen and lily shaped, under the trees.

"We must talk about it," said Ysobel, sitting down on a stump resolutely. "I know I'm not good enough to touch the hem of your skirt, but—what else have I a right to talk with you about?"

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"Oh, Ysobel," cried Alison, "you're cruel. It's only that—that—I am making the best of things and this—this—talk and you—put me back to that awful place where I was, and I shall have to begin over again."

They walked on in silence for some time, Alison smelling of the pyrola flowers, as if their cool, woodsy scent gave her strength.

"Now we've hit the Elk Mountain trail, and we're not by the way of meeting the hotel guests," said Ysobel. "Let's sit down here on this flat stone. I'm not going to make a fool of myself doing the penitent. I'm off for Constantinople to-morrow with the Claverings. Yes, people will think it's young Clavering this time, but I don't care. Alison, are you and Richard happy?"

"Ysobel, how dare you? *You!*" cried Alison, her olive cheek flushing crimson; but Ysobel's great gray eyes did not waver nor drop in shame.

"That's why I dare—I. I believe I am the only one in the world who knows how Richard loves you. The very devil possessed me last winter, Alison. I'd have played fast and loose with the Angel Gabriel if he'd come down to earth, but Richard—he never breathed a word of love to me, not a word. He was a man. I amused him. You know what a man is, or if you don't, I do. I led him on to be indiscreet. Why the Lord only knows—pure deviltry. But, Alison, as sure as you're a pure and faithful wife, he's been loyal to you. Did he never tell you?"

"I never let him," said Alison, very low. Her hands were so tightly shut that her knuckles shone like ivory. "After the first night, I made him keep silence."

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“Why?”

Alison put her head down to the flowers.

“Soiled, soiled. I had been dragged in the dust. My ideals came home to me with broken wings. Oh, it was dreadful.”

“You have kept him away from you all this time,” Ysobel continued, passionately. “You have held your head high and given him cold finger-tips. He has gone down on his knees to you with tears in his eyes. He has burned out his heart for you. Oh, how you have changed.”

“I cannot help it,” said Alison. “It’s what comes to everybody, I fancy, some time or other, in some way or other.”

“It wasn’t meant to come to you. You’re the sort of woman who’s above disillusion. It’s only cheap little souls like mine that wither up. There’s an everlasting bloom to you, Alison.”

Alison had not given way since the tempest of tears when Richard left the house after her one answer “*Mary*.” As Ysobel said, she had held her head high and gone about in proud quiet. Now Ysobel’s strange plea, the cynical, inconsistent tenderness of the reckless, child-eyed woman, stirred her out of her marble calm. She opened her empty hands and then flung them downward as if in despair at something lost.

“There, there,” soothed Ysobel, laughing her beautiful brook laugh, “you’ve not changed. You’re the same sweet, high-hearted thing, and you do love him, don’t you?”

“Why do you ask? Am I not his wife?”

“I adore you both, so don’t you think I can tell? Ah, you don’t know I have seen you together. I’ve

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passed you on the Speedway twice, and I watched you at the Casino. You've worn the look of a shut door, and he's been knocking, knocking."

"I could not help it," said Alison. She had said before *I cannot*. "Ysobel, I prayed to God, and He did not help me."

"But you believe in Richard now. You believe what I've told you. Oh, Alison, Alison! I remember so well your wedding-gown."

"I remember it, too."

"Blood and tears. And to think that I was the one to sow them. But you will believe and love him again, Alison?"

"Do you know," Alison whispered, drawing breath again from the white fragrant flowers, "I have not kissed him since that night!"

"And you prayed to God!"

Then, with a sudden change of tone: "Hello, it's getting late, and your man will be waiting for you. That's all I wanted to say. You are an angel to listen. Leave me here in the woods."

"You won't return with me?"

"You don't mind going alone? I must keep away from that beastly place till the last call."

"Good-bye, then, Ysobel. I wish you weren't going to Constantinople."

"With the Claverings?" Ysobel's laugh had a hard, little glitter in it.

The two women kissed each other, and Alison went down the trail alone. When she had disappeared, Ysobel lighted a cigarette and thought. Then she flung the half-burned stump behind her into the dry leaves and duff and started for the hotel. She picked up the pyrola flowers Alison had dropped.

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“How white and sweet-smelling,” she said, aloud. Then she flung them, too, behind her on the Elk Mountain trail.

Where her cigarette had fallen the dry leaves began to smoulder and burn in a stealthy, hesitant fashion. Little tongues of fire crept here and there, and were licked out by the night dew.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Firebrand

IT had been a dry summer. For weeks no rain had fallen, till the leaves on the trees curled up and were gray, the grass in front yards was burned and red, the corn-fields gaped and cracked, and even the marshes and beaver-meadows were so parched that the little boys could go barefoot with their blueberry pails and come home with never so much as the suspicion of water on the soles of their hard feet. Elder River flowed languidly over its hot stones, and the torrent at Lone Falls was diminished to a single woolly thread of foam, zigzag between castellated piles of rock. The trout could hardly find enough water to hide their shining sides, and the thirsty deer trampled knee-deep in the muddy runways for draughts of feverish water. Daddy Holme said there hadn't been no such droughty spell sence the iron-mines shet daown, and he suspicioned, when they had seen a power of snow in the winter, there 'ud be quare goings-on come dog-days. Old Si Newcombe remarked there hadn't been but one meaching sprenkle sence the late corn went in, and 'twas a living wonder the crops come up at all. Eli Barhite's wife remarked that the very sky was s'rinking and looked as it oughter be let out in the seams, but 'twas God

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A'mighty's consairn, not her'n. Sararose wilted daily, practising her songs at the new piano in the little white church on the lonely hill. She brightened when the Loon Lake stage brought her frequent letters from her Nixie.

Long after Elk Mountain folk had gone to bed, and when even the summer visitors had retired, a bright snake of fire twisted along the mountain westward with the gentle night wind. It seemed a living thing, glowing and wriggling in the darkness, intent on its predetermined way. When the hot orange morning dawned, the air hung heavy with smoke, and a sound like a vast sigh came from the distant hills. The mountain was on fire.

Tall plummy pines and pointed firs, flat-fronded hemlocks and tasselled tamaracks, ancient beeches and maples, trees that had stood for centuries in their primal solitude, were transfigured to living gold, their spirits went up ecstatically in swirls of fire and columns of dark smoke. All the long moaning day the forest gave itself over to Bacchic dithyramb. The surprised sky looked down on an under-coping of smoke, through which tree-tops pierced like gigantic torches and flocks of sparks flew upward till the vapor was sown with scarlet petals. Rivers of flame plunged through the upper air, fed by the impalpable powder of dried vegetation. Every twig, every needle, bore its huge auricle of flame, and the great trees burst like bomb-shells.

The creatures of the underwoods below had lost their radiant peep-holes of sky. They were caught beneath an impenetrable ceiling, and the forest silence had given way to a dreadful chorus of din, moans, and sighs of far-away flame, shouts of wind

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in the pine-tree tops, grinding of teeth in the underbrush. The little hunted creatures fled insanely from their holes and burrows. The large-eyed deer went side by side at a gallop, down the mountain, with the yellow monster and his hot breath at their back. The wind had veered, and Elk Mountain threatened the village lying at its foot.

Sararose went that afternoon to the lonely white church to try some new songs that Nixie had sent her. The forest fire seemed far away, and its only message a monotonous sigh. It mingled with the music she evoked in the coolness of the pine-encircled church. The light grew obscure till she had to bend over the keys to find her notes, yet it was hours before sunset. The air suffocated her so, she sought the door for a moment's respite. A long, rolling, murky billow lay across the mountain.

"The fire has died down," thought foolish little Sararose.

As a matter of fact, the changing wind carried it towards her, and the long, rolling billow was the outrunner of the fire which it screened. Nevertheless, she wondered why the air smelled like an oven and why the charred bits fell from nowhere on her hand. Tyke Loiseau rumbled by in his dusty two-wheeled cart, with bags of wool, on his way to Saranac. He pulled up when he saw Sararose. Her wistful loveliness in the doorway set his heart to beating in the old-time manner. He translated his heart-beats to brusque advice.

"Git in and I'll fetch you home, Sararose. The mounting is roaring like the deuce, and the smoke canting our way, too. If the breeze tuk a notion to blow up, we'd hev to fight fire all night, I reckon."

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But the girl only laughed, and said she wasn't afraid of a mountain fire. Indeed, she had no mind to ride home in the dusty cart with bags of wool under the seat, and swarthy Tyke next to her, making love.

"Git in, Sararose, do. I don't like to leave you here alone. The smoke's gitting in your pretty eyes, already."

"There's no smoke in my eyes," retorted she, with unconscious return to Elk Mountain repartee. "You must have been stopping at Windy Flanders's."

Loiseau, as much of a firebrand as his redoubtable ancestor, was stung by Sararose's indifference. Her year in New York had removed her outside his understanding. With a half oath he jumped from his cart.

"If I've been stopping at Windy Flanders's," he cried, "you shall know what druv me to it."

"I don't want to know. I'm practising songs, and I've no more time."

"Practising songs that some blooming fool from the city sends to you. But you shall know. It's you, you, you. Now go back to your songs, while the hull mounting burns, and I burn, burn, burn. Songs, songs!"

Loiseau flung out his whip and was off again at a gallop down the steep hill. Sararose went to her songs, but the air grew more oppressive, the light more obscure, and fear clutched at her heart. Then she heard the patter of little hoofs on the road. Running to the door, she saw a young deer, that hesitated a moment in his flight. The two startled young creatures looked at each other. Sararose remembered old Si's story of the great fire of '79, when the

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deer ran from the wood and even into the houses for shelter. She looked towards the mountain. The rolling murky billow was ominously nearer than when she had entered the church. With a faint cry, hatless as she was, she fled down the long, lonely hill towards the white roofs of the village. Her coin-bright hair shook and glistened as she ran.

Tyke Loiseau, waiting at the cross-roads out of sight behind the elder-bushes, saw the glister and heard the tripping of her light feet.

"She is safe," he thought, and went on his way.

Back by the church the air was so hot that it lay in glassy sheets and danced. A drunken swirl of flame staggered through the veil of dun, swept a semicircle of a thousand yards, and lighted a pine-tree in the burying-ground behind the church. The tree burst into flame like gunpowder, and the little deer, panic-stricken, ran within the door.

On the ridge behind the village, the ridge where Enoch and Alison had driven in the washed moonlight, where Richard and Ysobel had cantered at misty sunset, Tyke Loiseau, with his bags of wool, was hailed by Joe Hartle, returning from a day's work with his carnivorous-looking reaping-machine.

"Hello, Tyke," called Joe, standing, long and yellow, on a bar of his reaper, and looking like a grim conception of revenge; "the woods behind the burying-ground is on fire."

"The hull village will ketch if the wind blows up," said Tyke, with unmoved face. He brought his horse alongside of the revengeful machine.

"Bet you a dollar Enoch's meetin'-house burns to a cinder," chuckled Joe, yellower than ever in the

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hazy light from the curtained sky. "And a damned good thing it 'ud be."

"The church!" exclaimed Loiseau, as a distant crash came to his ears. He thought of the hatless figure flying down the hill and the beloved song-book abandoned on the piano. Sararose's songs, the church in peril, his own sneer! A rough idea of expiation framed itself and troubled his chest like a weight.

"By jingo, I forgot something." Loiseau was in too much of a hurry for plausibility. "Joc, take these reins; Patsy will follow. She's awful scart at fire. I'm going back to the cross-roads. No, don't wait for me. I'll meet you to Eddie's. So long."

"If he don't beat the devil for quickness," soliloquized Hartle, pursuing his way with the wicked machine, and Patsy meekly following. "What's got into his head, anyhow? Regular firebrand!"

Then a smile creased Hartle's leathery face at the prospect of Enoch's church in ashes.

The building was in flames when Loiseau reached it, but he was nothing daunted. He stumbled down the aisle through the dense smoke that already filled the room. The window behind the piano glared like the mouth of a red-hot furnace. The piano, over which he passed his fingers, scorched him like a stove cover, and was wrinkled and blistered to the touch. Now he had his hand upon the music. As he rolled it tight between his aching palms a whip of flame from a hemlock branch through the open window reached in and lashed him across the shoulders. With this fiery stroke searing his breast and the sting of burning wood in his eyes, he fell forward over a warm, furry body that lay beneath

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the pulpit. He felt the cold nose of a little deer pressed against his cheek, and for a minute two pleading, great eyes, an inch away, looked straight into his own.

As Loiseau raised himself in desperation he yet took brief compassion for the animal. He laid hold of a soft ear.

"Come, come," he cried, with a whistle, but the timid creature lay still, beating away its life in mortal suspense.

Loiseau staggered to the door, and as the flames of his clothing leaped to his eyebrows, the insanity of burning people seized him. He could see nothing but the brook, Crooked Brook in the hollows of the hill and its cool puddles, with smooth, healing mud. Like one pursued by demons, towards the brook he flew, his hands in their frantic clasp to his breast of Sararose's music-roll. The wind of his progress fanned the cruel flames that enveloped him. The cruel wind, the cruel length of the long hill, the tortured eyes that saw not!

The pain of those minutes was so intense that it wiped out self-consciousness, blotted all his senses. The physical man died in very ecstacy of agony, and only the spiritual man remained, exulting, swept in a whirlwind from heaven. His feet seemed borne on wings of fire, crimson hands drew him unutterably, loud voices shouted in his ear, *Forgiven. Forgiven.* that was the clear white star that shot delicious rays through the chaos of his delirium. The clear white star was a girl's white face, rayed with copper-gold hair. It dawned before him, beckoning, now here, now there, above, below, always white, starlike, steady, in the shimmering red-hotness. How strange

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it is that they who have most to forgive yearn hardest to be forgiven.

The instinct of the feet led him unerringly to the village. He passed swiftly, clad in flame. He did not know that he shouted aloud; he did not know that he suffered. He followed the clear white star, but the voice of the flesh shouted and cried:

“I burn, burn, burn!”

Women rushed to doors and windows and fell back in horror. Little children were dragged away from the savage cry. Its like had never before been heard in Elk Mountain. It was a cry that chilled to the marrow, not human, the cry of flesh riven from spirit. Even Sararose, sitting with Daddy in her kitchen, heard the throb of it. It went hot and cold along her spine and sent a giddiness to her temples.

“I burn, burn, burn!”

Through the village street, in the pale brown twilight, the Firebrand tore, a living man on fire from head to foot. The “setters” at Eddie’s, roused to awful energy, formed a cordon to stop him.

After the blankets were unrolled from his pitiful form, a charred roll of paper was found tightly clutched in the immovable, blackened fingers. A single bar of music could be deciphered, mysteriously engraved, black on black, in its innermost recesses.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Fight Fire!

ENOCH, in his buckboard, galloped from house to house, with the ringing cry, "Fight fire!" and the children cried in the darkened houses.

"Fight fire! Fight fire!" It was carried throughout the township, ominous as a call to arms at midnight. In an hour every man and boy had responded to the call, and with hoes, shovels, and spades the light infantry were at work, while the teams and ploughs, like heavy artillery, started the trenches and furrows that were to intercept the enemy. Of water there was a pitiful scarcity. Enoch was the general that marshalled his forces and divided them over the fields. With huge brooms of brush and twigs the surface fires were beaten down, and squads of men heaped spadefuls of fresh earth, like redoubts, to keep back the ever-advancing tide of flame.

Trenches were dug to intercept the underground fires that follow the roots of trees, to spring up sometimes a field's length from their source. All in the semidarkness and pungent smoke men drove their ploughshares in deep furrows through the furze and dry grass of upland pastures, while the hot south wind fanned the flames to fury, and spread yellow clouds, like a copper bowl, between them and the sky.

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The men worked wordlessly, and like demons, digging, spading, ploughing, beating, while now and again through the horrid twilight rang out Enoch's voice in brief command.

"Boys, we shall have to back-fire!" he shouted. "All the timber between us and the village must be burned!"

A squad of men were set on guard to control the back-fires. This was the last measure of safety.

The deer rushed out of the forests in herds, and, with the frightened cattle, sought refuge in the pools of the river, hurried through the village streets, or made their way in confusion to the shores of Lake Miquewaugua.

Eli Barhite and Gene Lawless worked side by side in a line of men, spading a trench through the golden-rods below Lost Inn. The yellow of the flowers was almost black in the obscure light, and an occasional lurid flash cut like lightning across the overhanging sky, as the wind carried the flames in long swirls. Sparks and charred leaves flew about them, and the air was like a furnace to breathe.

"That you, Gene?" said Eli. "Come close! Be my eyebrows singed off me?"

"Darned fool!" Gene replied, affably, wiping the sweat from his lip with a blackened palm. "If I were hombly as the old Harry, I wouldn't consider my eyebrows at sech a time."

The weird cries of the flying birds mingled with the sough of consuming trees.

Down at Camp Hollister, miles away from the flames and confusion, the dark and smoke oppressed like the day of doom. The servants were saying their beads as fast as they could chatter. Mrs. John Hollis-

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ter sailed about with subterranean oracular wisdom, and little Mary was subdued many minutes to large-eyed silence.

"This is the end of evlything," she was heard to say to the rag-baby, tightly clasped in her arms. "God is coming down plitty soon to take us all home. Don't be afraid, dolly. It's like waiting at Clistmas dinner. It takes an awful long time to get all way round, but He won't forget, dolly."

Mary was terribly afraid, but she did not want Alison nor dolly to know it.

"I'm going up to help the village people," said Richard to Alison. They stood together on the grass before the house, in the tawny twilight of mid-afternoon.

"Kiss me good-bye," and Alison lifted her Madonna face to his. She took his determination to go for granted, making no fuss, as his mother had done.

As her arms went round his neck, Richard knew that he was at last forgiven.

"Sweetheart!" he said, in the old, happy, boyish way. He was as happy that minute as if there had never come an estrangement between them.

His own sins did not trouble him, except as they troubled others. The shadow was lifted from Alison's eyelids. Richard began living and loving anew.

The air was full of a vast, distant roar, the undertone of fire. Richard laughed for pure light-heartedness.

"I'm—I'm—I'm—" he stammered, in boyish excuse. "Alison, you're divine in that corn-colored frock!" He touched the lace at her wrists. "You remind me, somehow, of the little Spanish ballad."

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“ ‘Since for kissing thee, Minguillo,’ ” quoted Alison.

“ ‘Let me have it quickly, darling!’ ” Richard took up the lines gayly. “ ‘Give me back my kiss, I pray.’ ”

He caught her in his arms once more, and then strode away through the trees into the befogged distance.

It was the second day of the fire when Enoch and Hollister found themselves side by side for the first time since Enoch had called him a liar. Neither man thought of that time, as they put all their strength to whipping out a tongue of underbrush on fire. Nothing was heard but the crackling of the flames and the flails of the men beating out the fiery harvest.

“ It would do for Doré’s *Inferno*, ” thought Richard, pausing for a moment to rest his weary arms.

The men were like black images on a fiery background, all in the sculpturesque attitudes of a furious winnowing. When night came on, scarcely distinguishable, the fire in places was under control or extinguished.

“ But till the last spark is gone, ” said Enoch to Richard, “ there is danger. It will sometimes linger for days in the duff of the underwoods, to break out without warning, or eat its way underground when we think it is conquered. ”

The two men stood together on a hill-side above the village. In the flashes of the conflagration on Cape Mountain, Enoch’s face, that was gray as ashes, shone like bronze.

“ See, on Elk Mountain, the fire has died down. The men in the next township are fighting, too. ”

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“ Shall we subdue it ? ”

“ The Elder River and the back-fires have saved us on the east. If the wind had been stronger the fire would have jumped the river. The waste lands will be easy to manage Crooked Brook way. They have been burned already by fallow fires in the spring, and Gene Lawless has gone there with a crew.”

“ Look ! ” cried Richard. “ It’s creeping to westward. I believe the wind has veered again.”

“ We shall have to fight all night,” was Enoch’s answer, as he saw that Richard’s observation was true.

Enoch sent his men home by relays to rest and relieve each other in turn. All night tired men slept by snatches, with their grimy clothes still on, and deep, gray channels of perspiration streaking their soot-colored faces. Anxious women sat at their windows in the sickly glow of that terrible night, while the working relays of tired men patrolled the outskirts of the conflagration. Thirty miles away, summer visitors on the Fulton lakes were strung out in boats, like a regatta, watching the splendid spectacle of the burning hills. At midnight a gentle rain began to fall.

“ What a pity ! ” sighed the summer regatta on the Fulton chain.

But it did not rain on Elk Mountain, for the intense heat caught the rain in upper air and distilled it to steam far above the tree-tops.

At three o’clock Enoch and Richard were on patrol along the Saranac road, near the little white house.

“ There is one great pine-tree on Hartle’s land,” said Enoch. “ If the wind should blow a gale, the

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fire would leap from the fringes of that fir-wood to the tree, and the tree would set the village on fire."

"Then the tree must go down," Richard responded. The flare from Cape Mountain illumined his face.

"Most of the boys have turned in. You know these great fires last for days with us, and the immediate danger seems averted."

"But the tree must go down," Richard repeated. "I can get an axe here from you."

"It would be a half-day's work for you, Hollister, and with this arm—"

He suddenly remembered the ugly twist he had given it, and came out with the thought impulsively.

Richard flushed. "It's as good as yours, Enoch," he replied, with a laugh. The laugh was a little forced, but the memory of Alison's corn-colored frock drowned all malice.

"You're—you're a man, Hollister!" Enoch blurted out, with compunction, and even as he spoke he reeled.

"The smoke in my eyes!"

"It's you that need to save yourself!" cried Richard, supporting him. "Why, man, you've been working like the deuce for twelve hours. Go home and go to bed!"

Enoch wiped the cold drops from his forehead.

"There'll have to be a crew of you at the big pine-tree," he said. "A sawyer and two choppers, or you'll make no headway. I'll send up Ab and Azzzy. I must patrol this road from end to end."

"I'm off, then. Let them follow."

"You see the pine, black there against the red sky?"

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Richard fell to whistling as, the axe over his shoulder, he flung off up the hill-side in the lurid night.

Sararose awoke to feel her brother bending above her.

Far up on the Hartle hill-side the three men were swinging at the great tree. The rising wind blew from Cape Mountain the blinding smoke in their face. So thick was the curtain that the fire behind it barely shot through. Once in a while a great sheet of light burst upward to the sky, as some dead tree yielded itself like gunpowder to the flames. The roar was such that Richard and Azzy, on opposite sides of the pine, could not hear each other's voices.

"It's gaining on us, boys!" shouted Ab.

"If it sets that alder-swamp a-fire, it'll be on us in less than no time!" shouted back Azzy.

They had gashed the tree deeply, but not yet cut to the middle, nor had it begun to sway on its base. Distant as they were from the fir-wood, the heat and smoke were almost unendurable.

"Run down to the village, Azzy, and warn the boys out. We must have some whippers-out up here, or—for the Lord's sake, run, Azzy!"

Richard and Ab were left alone, their alternate strokes punctuating dully the continuous, tumultuous roar. Above them on Cape Mountain the cruel fire leaped from tree-top to tree-top with inconceivable greed.

"Out of the way!" called Ab, savagely, as he felt the tree vibrate to the last stroke of his axe. The great shiver that precedes the fall shook it from top to butt. He sprang backward down the hill-side, unseeing and unseen in the thick smoke that poured as

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from the mouth of a furnace. Richard, strong arm and clear eye, was not woodsman enough to keep clear-headed at this last moment. He saw nothing about him but the lurid curtain, and he ran, only to be knocked senseless by the huge tree's bole. He was tangled beneath the branches. Ab went on down the hill, little imagining that Richard did not follow, in the darkness.

There Richard Hollister lay, with the mark on his temple of the tree's jagged blow, an occasional flash from the burning woods lighting his quiet, handsome face. "Out of the way!" were the last words on earth that he heard, but the last vision before his eyes was the Madonna face and the adorable corn-colored frock that reminded him of the Spanish ballad.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Thy Gardens and thy Gallant Walks

SARAROSE's imagination was haunted all that night by the flaming phantom of her dead lover. Her feelings were always more awake by night than by day. Even her conscience, an easy mistress in sunshine, troubled her during the night-watches, and tormenting memories that left her waking hours alone would visit her dreams. Perhaps it was a remnant of the traditions of orthodoxy that makes one's sleeping hours seem full of unknown peril, and to be guarded by special prayers. Sararose had often arisen from bed in the middle of the night with the horror of the unprotected upon her, and remembered that she had forgotten the night-spell, which she would proceed hastily to mumble:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

But to-night this spell would not avail. She saw again the swarthy, eager face, leaning above the bags of wool, heard his imperious request and her own light, scoffing tones in answer. Then the darkness of

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her room reeled with the fierceness of his last words, "*I burn, burn, burn!*" She put her hands upon her eyes, or buried her face in the pillow, but she could not shut away the image of that thing of fire. Then she would begin all over again with the meeting in the church door. She followed him down the road in his fiery quest for home. She called to him, implored him to stop, to put out the flames by rolling over and over, still he flew, a thing of fire, and she followed after, calling to him that she was sorry, to turn and listen, listen! "I am sorry, sorry!" In Sararose's brief calendar of trouble the blackest days had yielded to that simple formula, "I am sorry." For her blackest days had been shadowed by Enoch's displeasure. Her own nature was not tenacious of grief or accusation.

But there was no one to hear her confession. She was almost angry with the sullen silence, till dull reality broke through the roof of her persistent imagining. She remembered that Loiseau lay forever mute in his mother's house on the windy ridge. For one thing she was passionately thankful: that it was not she who had driven him to wilful suicide. This was the first thought that had come to her, and it seemed then that he had chosen the most exquisite revenge. But Eli Barhite had brought her the charred bit of paper, carefully enclosed in a match-box.

"I kinder thought you might take a notion to keep it, seeing he done it for you," Eli had explained, in his gentle, awkward way.

He did not know about Nixie, and he feared that tender Sararose would be heart-broken. He passed the back of his hand across his eyes, muttered something

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about a durned shame, and shambled out in silence. The very droop of his homespun coat, and the bend of his knock-kneed trousers, had bespoken sympathy. Sararose grew misty in response to his pity for her.

Sleep came to her but once during the night, a brief, feverish confusion, from which the old, awful cry awaked her. Once again, and for the last time, she rebuilt the fateful afternoon. How kind she was to him. She smiled and gave him her hand—her slender hand in his hot, hard grasp—and she did not shudder nor draw back at all. Now it was daylight, the sun, an orange ball, hung in the brownish sky, and as she dressed herself she saw out of her windows the heavy pall of smoke where Cape Mountain had been wont to greet her with its rosy, shining tops.

Sararose was consumed with melancholy over the tragedy of which she was heroine. She was moved by a profound pity for herself. She went about the house in mechanical fulfilment of the morning duties. She hoped her brothers would soon return, for breakfast was ready, and the loneliness of the house was frightful. The dejected little canary-bird refused to utter a note, and Daddy still slept.

When she could endure the silence no longer she went to the piano. Music comforted her by its harmony with moods. Her listless fingers turned the leaves of the hymn-book, till she came to the heading, "Resurrection and Everlasting Life." Here were wistful, melancholy airs, yet some with a strange note of triumph, a wild trumpet-cry, thrilling the minor plaint of consolation.

"Oh, mother dear, Jerusalem!"

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Her plaintive, girlish soprano floated through the open window:

“Oh, mother dear, Jerusalem!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end,
Thy joys when shall I see?”

She did not know that at that moment her four brothers, carrying a solemn burden, went slowly by the house. They paused a moment to listen:

“Thy turrets and thy pinnacles
With carbuncles do shine;
Thy very streets are paved with gold
Exceeding clear and fine.”

To those who watch, the face of the dead seems sometimes crossed by shifting lights, more subtle far than the lights of a living countenance. Richard Holister, stirless and white upon their arms, seemed to speak with a motionless, inner smile, swift as pale summer lightning. Did the splendid heaven of the old Latin poet please his fancy, or had he learned better?

“Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
Continually are green;
There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers,
As nowhere else are seen.”

Sararose's voice was intolerably tender. A tear dropped from Azzy's large blue eyes on Richard's unknowing face. Enoch's long, strange mouth

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took on an expression of almost unearthly sternness.

“Quite through the streets with silver sound
The flood of life doth flow—”

The infinitely sorrowful sweetness of the singing voice expressed a youthful joy to be sad. It followed them down the road:

“Quite through the streets with silver sound
The flood of life doth flow,
Upon whose banks on every side
The wood of life doth grow.”

As they left the high-road with their burden, and turned between the odorous pines of the camp-trail, it mingled faintly with the breath of wind in the upper branches:

“Upon whose banks on every side
The wood of life doth grow.”

CHAPTER XL

The Naked Soul

BETWEEN midnight and morning Mary sat bolt upright in her little bed beside Mrs. John Hollister's.

"I think I hear God calling some one, calling, calling, calling," said Mary.

The sighing of distant forests in flame was the only noise. The sky out of their window showed pale streamers, like a great city in the distance. Mary clasped her white-gowned knees and listened, despite Mrs. John's drowsy admonitions.

"Does God take persons in their evly-day clothes, or will he wait just a littly bit while they gets all dressed up?"

"God doesn't take our bodies; only our souls, dear."

"Does the souls have to go all naked?" asked Mary, aghast. "I'm not zackly sure what is my soul, Aunty. I did never see it. Is it what comes up in my froat when I've been naughty?"

Mrs. John was half asleep again, so Mary was left by herself to ponder eternal things. As her wont was, she satisfied herself with a search for causes.

"I s'pose bodies is such a bovver, getting tired and hungly and their feet all stained, so he just takes souls. Souls is nice and clean."

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With this bit of reasoning, Mary went to sleep again.

Some hours later she awoke to find herself alone in the room. She called Auntie, she called Alison, she called Hannah, but no one answered. She put on her little red shoes and, standing on tip-toe at the dressing-table, brushed daintily at her pretty light-brown hair.

"Plaps God has tookeen all the others and forgot me," she said. "He will not be angly 'cause littly gells come in their nightie."

She went slowly down the stairs in her night-gown and little unbuttoned red shoes, talking softly to herself. A strange sobbing sound came to her from below. Across the banisters she could see the dining-room, with the chairs empty and the breakfast untouched on the table. Then around the corner of the stairs she came upon that stricken group in the alcove of the large hall.

"Oh, dear, what is the matter?" trembled Mary.

Mr. Hollister had his arm around his wife, who was sobbing aloud. His own face was drawn to pitiful lines.

"Look at the poor child," whispered Mrs. John, moved anew to grief.

The little girl stood still, her lips quivering.

"Where is Alison? Where is Dickie?"

"Dickie, my dear child—" But the Colonel broke down and could say no more.

"Dickie, Dickie," called Mary, with a child's instant comprehension, "I want my Dickie."

"Hush, he cannot answer you," said June.

Alison was in the next room with the dead, and

The Naked Soul

they did not want her to hear Mary's wild, little voice.

"Alison is in there with—him," said June, crying again and drawing the little child to her.

"God has taken him," said the Colonel, in a husky voice.

The calling in the night suddenly came to Mary. She had forgotten it till now.

"I heard God calling him," she said, with a blithe little laugh. She went to the door, within which was Alison.

"Let her go," said some one. "Perhaps she will be a comfort."

Mary closed the door softly behind her. She saw the still form on a couch and her sister sitting on the floor by his side. Alison's face was almost as quiet as the face of the dead. The eloquent fluttering fingers lay pitifully tranquil in her lap.

"They said God had taken him, but there he is."

The quaint little figure in the night-gown and unbuttoned red shoes stepped to Alison's side. Alison's hands did not stir. Mary was moved by the stillness to great fear.

"Why don't you call him? Is he sleeping?" she whispered, with her lips at Alison's ear.

Alison turned her dry eyes to Mary.

"Yes, he is sleeping."

Then the rest of the night's memory came to the child. She sat down on the floor, and her voice was hushed to deepest solemnity, the heavenly gravity of a little child.

"His soul has gone up all naked," she said, in that deep, grave voice.

"Oh, Mary, Mary, Mary," cried Alison, bursting

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into passionate sobs. "If only I could speak to him once more. Only once more. Richard, my Richard!"

The long, lovely sunny years crowded fast upon her, scorching her cheeks with tears.

"Don't cly, please. I think God didn't have time to get all way round. He beganned with the big ones, and Dickie is a great big man, isn't he, Alison? Don't cly, please. I don't think God has forgot us."

Mary looked into Alison's face with a dear, flickering, brave smile.

How still Richard lay there, with the dignity of death upon his beautiful, purified face.

CHAPTER XLI

Hitting the Trail

ENOCH had spent the night in a woodman's shanty more than half-way up the side of Mount Taseco. The great fire of the previous summer, that had made slash timber of so many acres, had not touched this range. He had been trying to find the trail of his dream. All the afternoon he had followed this and that wood-road, abandoned paths that led nowhere. Had he only dreamed it, after all, the trail that ascended the mountain, the spring with the maiden-hair ferns leaning over, the great rock dripping moisture, and between two tamaracks the triangle of blue sky?

While the stars yet glimmered in the gray, he awoke and went out to the woods. Only a few steps through the trees and between the juniper bushes he came upon a matted path of needles. There was the great rock. He had hit the trail. Going nearer, he found the spring shining like a cairngorm, and, all in a feathery green rain, the tiny forest of maiden-hair ferns. Between two twisted tamaracks up the hill-side was a triangle of sky with one star winking. He had hit the trail. He went on gladly. It was early June. The woods were dark, wet, sweet-smelling. The spruce branches were tipped with

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plummy gold, and the newly budded birches among the sombre firs shone like green flames. On each side of his path the wood-sorrel spread a starry carpet. Now and again came the aromatic odor of hidden twin-flowers, more pungent for the dimness and the dew.

As he neared the top the air grew keener, and banks of coarse, bright snow made ghostly heaps under the rocks. He drew a long breath, climbed the last slide of stone, and stood on the summit. A sea of clouds tossed around him, above and below, white as a sea of snow. Some of those snowy tossing waves were edged with fire. The wild heart of dawn has never the calm of sunset.

“Who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire.”

The flaming fire of His feet ran along the eastern horizon, turned the sky to one great burning flower. The wind of His wings pulsed through the under sea. Everywhere were shreds of cloud and fog and mist, lifted upward, upward, torn apart, drifting, like gauzy petals scattered of the great burning flower. Mountain-top after mountain-top broke through its white sheath, lighted sister fires to answer the terrible sweet spirit on Enoch's mountain-top. The veiled valley lands began to emerge, and Lake Miquewanga shone like a rosy shield in vast swathings of mist. Purity, purity, purity, sang the morning.

Enoch spoke with great humbleness:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.”

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